

DILLON
CONSULTING

MUNICIPALITY OF NORTH PERTH AND TOWN OF ST. MARYS

Transit Needs Assessment

Final Report



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Executive Summary

Dillon Consulting Limited (Dillon) was retained by the Municipality of North Perth and the Town of St. Marys to assess transportation gaps and study the feasibility of introducing or expanding transit service tailored to the needs of each community. North Perth is currently served by PC Connect Route 1, connecting Listowel to the Region of Waterloo, and was formerly served by the Rural Route connecting to Stratford and Mitchell. St. Marys is currently served by PC Connect Route 2 to Stratford and the Region of Waterloo, and Route 3 to London and Stratford. The end of the provincial Community Transportation Grant program resulted in the cancellation of the Rural Route in March 2025, and the remaining PC Connect routes are currently being maintained on temporary funding pending the findings of this study, leaving the future of the service uncertain.

While this report was done in collaboration with both municipalities, the recommended outcomes have been tailored to the individual needs of the respective communities:

- North Perth is currently experiencing growth, particularly in the urban area of Listowel, and the loss of the Rural Route has resulted in new mobility gaps. Immediate needs were identified for better commute options for residents travelling to the Region of Waterloo for both education and employment, in addition to reverse commuters travelling to employment areas in Listowel.
- St. Marys has an aging population that needs around-town travel options and better connections to nearby Stratford. Improving local transit options while maintaining essential regional connections were identified early on as key goals of this transit needs assessment.

Extensive community engagement, including online surveys, stakeholder meetings, and in-person open houses revealed a strong preference for fixed-route network improvements within both municipalities:

- In North Perth, residents emphasized the major loss of the Rural Route, isolating residents in communities like Atwood and Monkton. It was also heard how residents desired better commuter-trip options to Waterloo Region.
- In St. Marys, residents emphasized a desire for more internal travel options to access employment, groceries, the Pyramid Recreation Centre, and other services. It was also heard that existing connections to Stratford and London were both valued, especially with the loss of GO Transit rail service.

This report found that continuing the PC Connect system would most effectively improve transit within the two municipalities, while maintaining essential regional transit services.

In North Perth, recommendations include adjusting Route 1 to provide improved trip times to Waterloo Region and adding more stops within Listowel to improve access to the service. Replacing part of the former Rural Route, a new PC Connect Route 4 has also been recommended in partnership with the

Municipality of West Perth and the City of Stratford, operating between Listowel and Stratford via Mitchell.

In St. Marys, recommendations include streamlining the connections to Stratford, by adjusting Route 3 to provide more trips and greater internal coverage. It was heard that access to London remains essential for residents, and this connection has been preserved while maintaining levels of service to Stratford. By separating Route 2 and Route 3 between St. Marys and Stratford, service will be easier to plan and coordinate, with connections to the wider PC Connect network more clearly organized in Stratford.

Other recommendations for improving the overall PC Connect operations and management have been included to help build a robust and sustainable transit service. This includes maintaining and formalizing Stratford Transit as the de facto managing entity of the service, as they already have experience in overseeing and planning the service along with their extensive urban transit network. This would be supported by a shared service agreement among the funding partners of the service, formalizing a periodic PC Connect committee to oversee service performance and coordination.

This plan also includes adjustments to the fare structure of the service, allowing new local fares for in-town trips in St. Marys and Listowel, and more consistently applied short-distance fares. This plan also includes consideration for the short- and medium-term funding of the recommendations, which includes leveraging the Ontario Transit Investment Fund.

Finally, further recommendations for collaborating with local specialized transit service providers have been identified to ensure transit remains accessible to all residents of both North Perth and St. Marys.

Throughout this Transit Needs Assessment, it was heard how essential transportation is for residents of the municipalities, including for students, commuters to urban areas for work, those seeking work, seniors accessing programs, and individuals simply seeking more ways to travel around. The recommended plan will prioritize PC Connect to continue its essential transit services, ensuring the long-term viability of the service and dependable mobility options for the communities served by the network.

Introduction

The Municipality of North Perth (North Perth) and the Town of St. Marys (St. Marys) are looking to better understand the current transportation gaps internal and external to both municipalities and identify public transportation options to address these gaps. These communities currently provide external transit connections through PC Connect, which is a rural inter-community transit network operating in Perth County with connections to London and Waterloo Region.

PC Connect started in 2020 with funding through the Community Transportation Grant (CTG) program from the Government of Ontario, which provided funding to municipalities for the costs associated with operating rural transit systems. This service provides connections between the urban centres of Perth County, otherwise unserved or underserved by public transportation. North Perth, St. Marys, and the City of Stratford jointly fund and operate three routes in the PC Connect network:

- Route 1, from Listowel (North Perth) to Kitchener;
- Route 2, from Kitchener to St. Marys through Stratford; and
- Route 3, from Stratford to London through St. Marys.

Perth County also initially funded two routes as part of the PC Connect network:

- Route A, operating as a loop between Stratford, Mitchell, Listowel, and Milverton; and
- Route B, operating as a loop between Stratford, St. Marys, Kirkton, and Mitchell.

Route B was discontinued in 2023, and frequency was consequently increased on Route A, which was renamed the Rural Route. Funding for PC Connect through the CTG program ended on March 31, 2025, requiring additional municipal funding to continue operation. As a result, Perth County discontinued the Rural Route, leaving key service gaps within North Perth and between North Perth and Stratford. North Perth, St. Marys, and Stratford extended municipal funding for Routes 1 to 3 until December 2025.

This study aims to address two goals considering the uncertainty of funding for the existing service:

1. Propose opportunities to improve travel internal to North Perth and St. Marys, acknowledging the current network primarily serves external destinations; and
2. Identify options for travel external to North Perth and St. Marys, which may include a continuation of parts of the existing PC Connect service and/or introduction of a new service option.

2.0 Background: North Perth

2.1 Existing Conditions

The Municipality of North Perth has a largely rural profile, with the population centre of Listowel being the centrally located economic hub of the municipality. North Perth is 494 km² and has a population of 15,538 (2021), with approximately 61% of residents living within Listowel. Other notable population centres within the municipality include Monkton, Atwood, and Gowanstown, with several other named settlements across the municipality.

Outside of North Perth, the community of Palmerston (population 2,989) is located immediately adjacent to the northern border of North Perth in the Town of Minto in Wellington County. Other major nearby population centres include Stratford, St. Marys, Kitchener, Waterloo, Fergus/Elora, Wingham, and Mitchell. **Figure 1** depicts the communities in and around North Perth, and the existing PC Connect service connections.

The transportation network is heavily characterized by private automobiles, with limited public transit options for residents and visitors to the municipality. The primary corridors in the community are Highway 23 and Line 86, which intersect in Listowel. Approximately 60% of the municipality's roads are unpaved, which can cause maintenance challenges in the winter.

Active transportation infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists is currently mostly concentrated within population centres like Listowel, which has a comprehensive sidewalk network, limited on-street bike lanes, and cycling trails. There are three designated cycling trails that travel through North Perth:

- The Perth County Adventure & Gravel Circuit, a mixed paved and gravel multi-day trail between Gowanstown, Listowel, Atwood, Monkton, Mitchell, Fullarton, and St. Marys;
- The North Perth & Perth East Road Ride, a mostly paved trail between Listowel, Millbank, and Milverton; and
- The Kinsmen Trail in Listowel, which provides an additional local connection through some of the residential neighbourhoods in town.

2.1.1 Market Review

North Perth is a growing municipality. The population of the municipality grew 18.3% between 2016 and 2021, with Listowel growing 26.7% over the same period. This population increase is driven in part by a growing manufacturing and industrial sector, with numerous companies located in Listowel thanks to its central location within the municipality and among neighbouring townships. Approximately 40% of residents are youth under 20 years old or seniors aged 65 years or older, who are more likely to benefit from transit.

Listowel is the primary population centre within the municipality and is a compact community with residential, commercial, mixed-use, and industrial areas. There are big-box retail stores, like Canadian Tire and Walmart, located in the west end of town, and outlying industrial employers in the northern and southern ends. Downtown Listowel has multiple small-businesses and public amenities, including the North Perth Public Library and the Listowel Memorial Hospital.

Expected major destinations in the community are identified in **Table 1**. Listowel is the primary destination of interest for shopping and local services in or near North Perth and is expected to be the focal point of most transportation needs internal to the municipality. Most other major destinations are located along Highway 23. The community of Palmerston in Wellington County is also included, as it has some potential as a destination for residents of North Perth living near the north end of the municipality.

Major employers are predominantly in the manufacturing, agri-food, transportation, retail, and healthcare sectors. Large employers operating in North Perth include:

- Avon Maitland District School Board (500+ employees);
- Erie Meat Products (200-499 employees);
- Gray Ridge Eggs (200-499 employees);
- Horst Welding (HLA) (100-199 employees);
- Listowel Technology Inc. (500+ employees);
- Listowel Memorial Hospital (~250 employees);
- Walmart (100-199 employees); and
- Zehrs (100-199 employees).

Numerous other employers are concentrated in the centre of Listowel, as well as the industrial zones to the north and south of the town along Highway 23. In addition to these companies, many residents are employed directly and indirectly through the agricultural sector, with Listowel being a commercial and employment hub for area farms.

Table 1: Key Destinations in or Near North Perth

Community	Categories	Key Destinations	Key Notes
Atwood	Services	Elma Memorial Community Centre	Atwood is a residential community located south of Listowel, with some small businesses and services located along Highway 23 and new residential developments in the northeast of the community.
Gowanstown	Services	Gowanstown Mennonite School	Gowanstown is a small residential community located along Highway 23 at Line 88, north of Listowel.
Listowel	Errands	Walmart, Loblaws, Canadian Tire, Downtown, Shoppers Drug Mart	Listowel is the primary population centre in North Perth. Big box stores are located on the edge of the urban area, though new subdivisions are expanding the size of the town toward these stores.
	Services	Downtown, Listowel Branch Library, Listowel Memorial Hospital, Listowel District Secondary School, St. Mary Catholic School, Listowel Christian School, Steve Kerr Memorial Complex	Listowel has several key social services, including the Listowel Memorial Hospital and other services in the Downtown. Listowel has schools which serve the ward and the wider rural area. Most students who live in-town do not qualify for school bus service and walk/cycle/drive to school, while students from out-of-town travel via school bus.
Monkton	Services	Elma Logan Recreation Complex	Monkton is a residential community at the border of West Perth, with some small businesses located along Highway 23.
Palmerston	Services and Errands	Foodland, Palmerston and District Hospital	Palmerston is a larger community located in Minto at the border of North Perth, which may be the destination of interest for residents near the north end of North Perth.
Kurtzville	Services	Wallace Community Centre	Kurtzville is a residential community located along Line 88 west of Gowanstown, with a small industrial area at the east end of the community.

2.2 Policy and Plan Review

Within the context of this report, the Municipality of North Perth is primarily guided by the following provincial, local, and regional policy and planning documents:

- Provincial Planning Statement, 2024;
- Perth County Official Plan, 2024;
- North Perth Transportation Master Plan, 2024; and
- Listowel Ward Official Plan, 2010.

Listowel is the most populated centre within North Perth, and as such, has some planning considerations unique from the more rural areas of the municipality. The Listowel Ward Official Plan (2010) is the most recent iteration of Listowel's master planning document pre-amalgamation, prior to becoming part of the much larger Municipality of North Perth. This document primarily serves to guide the land use patterns and built form of Listowel. The plan also notes the importance of balancing the growth of the Listowel urban area with the surrounding agricultural uses, all while ensuring the ward has sufficient area to accommodate both population and economic growth.

Key themes from these plans are identified in **Table 2**. Investment and improved transportation networks broadly support the vision and goals in these plans, which include the direct and indirect importance of public transit within the context of housing, access to jobs and services, sustainable transportation, and economic development.

Table 2: Key Policy and Plan Themes for North Perth

Theme	Policy or Plan	Notes
Transit	Perth County Official Plan	“Continue to promote, support, and improve PC Connect public transit service.”
Sustainable Transportation	North Perth Transportation Master Plan	“Protection of significant natural environmental areas... and air quality”
Other Transportation	North Perth Transportation Master Plan	Efficiency in moving people and degree of network connectivity and continuity. Identified microtransit as a potentially viable shared mobility option.
	Provincial Planning Statement	As part of a multimodal transportation system, connectivity within and among transportation systems and modes should be planned for, maintained, and, where possible, improved, including connections which cross jurisdictional boundaries.
Active Transportation	Listowel Ward Official Plan	The Plan notes the importance of “compact development” and to encourage active transportation like walking and cycling in Listowel.
	North Perth Transportation Master Plan	Range of active transportation options available.
Equity and Seniors	North Perth Transportation Master Plan	“[Shared mobility] services can have many positive impacts on overall community and individual well-being, social cohesion, community identity, and equity”
Housing and Housing Affordability	Listowel Ward Official Plan	To promote housing for senior citizens, those with special needs, and low-income households that are unable to find adequate housing through the private market.
	Provincial Planning Statement	<p>Planning authorities shall support general intensification and redevelopment to support the achievement of complete communities, including by planning for a range and mix of housing options and prioritizing planning and investment in the necessary infrastructure and public service facilities.</p> <p>Planning authorities shall provide for an appropriate range and mix of housing options and densities to meet projected needs of current and future residents of the regional market area.</p>

3.0

Background: St. Marys

The Town of St. Marys is a compact population centre with 7,386 (2021) residents over an area of approximately 12.5 km². While largely a residential community, St. Marys has several large industrial plants and facilities in town. The older and newer residential areas are located along Queen Street and James Street, which intersect in the town centre. The Thames River runs north-south, with two road crossings to the south and one trail crossing to the north. Trout Creek runs east-west approximately one block north of Queen Street, with three in-town road crossings and one trail crossing. **Figure 2** depicts the communities around St. Marys, and the existing PC Connect service connections.

St. Marys is divided between four distinct quadrants:

- the West Area, which is located west of the Thames River;
- the Southwest Area, which is located to the west of James Street, south of Trout Creek, and east of the Thames River;
- the Southeast Area, which is located east of James Street and south of Trout Creek; and
- the North area, which is located north of Trout Creek.

These quadrants each have unique destinations, character, and neighbourhood amenities. Employment areas are largely concentrated at the outer areas of town, including south along James Street towards Highway 7, and east and west along Queen Street. This means that walking to these destinations may be inconvenient for residents in certain parts of the town.

The active transportation network largely consists of sidewalks in-town. Most residential streets, including low-volume routes, have sidewalks on at least one side. Marked crosswalks are provided at some intersections, but because of generally low neighbourhood traffic volumes, they are mostly situated along the busier roads (Queen Street and James Street). Cycling infrastructure in-town is largely composed of several trails (including the Limestone Trail and the Grand Trunk Trail) and other park pathways providing shortcuts for cyclists and pedestrians. The well-connected network of low-traffic residential streets are generally well suited to cyclists.

Highway 7 is located to the south and east of the town and is a two-lane rural highway connecting west to London via Highway 4 and east to Stratford and Waterloo Region. James Street, Water Street, and Queen Street all connect to Highway 7, and are the primary access points to the town.

3.1.1 Market Review

St. Marys is a compact town with a stable population. The population of the municipality grew to 7,386 residents in 2021, which was a modest 1.7% increase from 2016. The demographic profile indicates a notable proportion of senior residents aged 65 and over (26.5% in 2021), suggesting a potential demand for more accessible and coverage-based transit options.

Expected major destinations in the community are identified in **Table 3**. Most major destinations are in Downtown St. Marys, with pockets of destinations located in other areas of the town.

The local economy is supported by a mix of industries, with major employers in sectors like manufacturing, agri-food, transportation, and commercial. While regional transit services are provided to the town, there remains gaps in service and local coverage. There is an identified need to provide regular transit service to employers for workers in-town, as well as to increase accessibility to essential social services, healthcare, and social connections.

Major employers in St. Marys include:

- Veterinary Purchasing (200-250 employees);
- Finnie's Distributing (~50 employees);
- Perth County Ingredients (25-50 employees);
- St. Marys Quarry;
- Delmar Foods;
- Cascades;
- INOAC Exterior Systems;
- Shur-Gain/Trouw Nutrition;
- Saputo;
- Caledon Tubing;
- McKinley Hatchery;
- McLean Taylor; and
- BSC.

Employment data was not available for all employers, but the list above is generally representative of the largest employers in the town.

Table 3: Key Destinations in St. Marys

Area	Categories	Key Destinations	Key Notes
Downtown	Errands, Services, and Transit Connections	Train Station, Foodland, Library, Town Hall, Post Office, Banks	Downtown is a compact, mixed-use area with several large and small businesses and some residences.
West Area	Services	St. Marys Memorial Hospital, YMCA	The West Area is largely developed around Queen Street West, with the St. Marys Memorial Hospital located centrally in the area. Apart from some businesses near Thames Road North, the area is largely residential.
North Area	Errands and Other	St. Marys Farmers Market, St. Marys Junction Neighbourhood, Broken Rail Brewing	The North Area is primarily residential, and somewhat more separated from the rest of the town by rail lines and Trout Creek. New development is occurring in this area.
Southwest Area	Errands	Canadian Tire	The Southwest Area has many downtown businesses and other major employers in addition to surrounding residential areas.
	Services and Attractions	St. Marys Quarry, Salvation Army, St. Marys Museum, Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame	
Southeast Area	Errands	Independent	The Southeast Area is large, with many businesses and both mature and new residential subdivisions. Popular parks and recreation destinations are located in this area. Several schools are in this area.
	Services	Pyramid Recreation Centre, Friendship Centre, St. Marys Golf and Country Club, Rotary Club	
	Education	St. Marys DCVI, Little Falls Public School	

3.2 Policy and Plan Review

Within the context of this report, the Town of St. Marys is primarily guided by the following provincial, local, and regional policy and planning documents:

- Provincial Planning Statement, 2024; and
- St. Marys Official Plan, 2024.

Identified within these plans is a strong need to provide accessible and equitable transportation networks. **Table 4** outlines the common and primary themes from the documents most relating to public transportation. This includes supporting land use, housing construction, and to support a growing and aging population are some of the plan priorities that transportation helps supports.

Table 4: Key Policy and Plan Themes for St. Marys

Theme	Policy or Plan	Notes
Other Transportation	St. Marys Official Plan	“To establish a transportation system capable of providing for the safe and efficient movement of people, goods, and services...”
	Provincial Planning Statement	As part of a multimodal transportation system, connectivity within and among transportation systems and modes should be planned for, maintained, and, where possible, improved, including connections which cross jurisdictional boundaries.
Active Transportation	St. Marys Official Plan	“Opportunities to develop new trails or extend existing trails throughout the town will continue to be encouraged...”
Equity and Seniors	St. Marys Official Plan	“...promote a full range of housing types, affordability, and densities to meet the needs for Senior Citizens, persons with disabilities and households with lower incomes.”
Housing and Housing Affordability	St. Marys Official Plan	“the development of a compact development form in order to encourage and facilitate active transportation”
	Provincial Planning Statement	Planning authorities shall support general intensification and redevelopment to support the achievement of complete communities, including by planning for a range and mix of housing options and prioritizing planning and investment in the necessary infrastructure and public service facilities. Planning authorities shall provide for an appropriate range and mix of housing options and densities to meet projected needs of current and future residents of the regional market area

Existing Transportation Options

Currently, transportation options outside of private automobiles are limited in North Perth and St. Marys. Primary options include PC Connect, which connects Listowel to Waterloo Region and St. Marys to Stratford and London, taxi services, and VON Transportation or the St. Marys and Area Mobility Service for passengers requiring specialized transportation. While these connect parts of North Perth and St. Marys to areas outside of each municipality, there are gaps in the ability to travel internally within the municipalities, particularly in North Perth. Individuals without a driver's license or who do not own a car are reliant on others for travel needs, lowering their independence and their ability to get to essential destinations and services. Public transit access within the municipalities would better enable residents without a car to freely travel to run errands, get to school and work, receive healthcare, access essential social services, and visit friends and family.

In addition to the PC Connect service, Stratford operates a local bus system from the Cooper Street Terminal, near the Stratford VIA station. VIA Rail provides regional transit service once per day per direction, with connections to Toronto to the northeast and London to the southwest. There are also some private coach lines that connect to Stratford, but none that currently operate to St. Marys or North Perth.

Table 5 identifies the existing transit services within the study area, which are summarized along with key performance indicators as reported by the City of Stratford for the PC Connect service, and in the 2023 Ontario Specialized Transit Services Fact Book for the remaining two services. In **Table 6**, a further summary has been provided of other local and regional transportation services.

Table 5: Summary of Transit Services in Study Area

Service	Eligibility	Annual Operating Cost	Annual Ridership	Annual Service Hours	Fare	Cost Recovery Ratio	Service Hours
PC Connect ¹	Everyone	\$695,349	24,318 ²	8,164	\$6 to \$12	16.5%	5:30 a.m.- 5:30 p.m. M-F 9:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m. Sat
St. Marys and Area Mobility Service ³	Seniors and people with disabilities	\$389,724	11,536	Unreported	\$5 to variable	27.2%	24/7, demand-based bookings only available during business hours
VON Transportation ⁴	Medical trips	\$208,514	4,836	3,534	\$5 to variable	54.5%	8:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m. M-F

Table 6: Other Mobility Options in Study Area

Service	Type	Eligibility	Fare	Service Hours
Listowel Taxi ⁴	Regional and local	All	Variable	24 hours
Stonetown Taxi ³	Regional and local	All	Variable	24 hours
VIA Rail ³	Regional	All	Variable	1 trip per direction/day

¹ Route 1 operates in North Perth, Routes 2 and 3 operate in St. Marys. PC Connect stats do not include Rural Route costs, ridership, or hours.

² Ridership stats from 2024

³ Only operates in St. Marys

⁴ Only operates in North Perth

4.1

Perth County (PC) Connect

PC Connect operates three bus routes across Perth County:

- Route 1, from Listowel to Kitchener Central Station;
- Route 2, from Kitchener Central Station to St. Marys through Stratford; and
- Route 3, from London (Masonville PI) to Stratford through St. Marys.



This transit service is jointly funded by the City of Stratford, the Town of St. Marys, and the Municipality of North Perth. Service delivery is contracted through Voyago who is responsible for providing and maintaining vehicles, drivers, and for operational supervision. The responsibility of monitoring and planning the service is currently being undertaken by Stratford Transit. PC Connect routes in Stratford stop at the Stratford Transit Terminal on Cooper Street. In 2024, annual ridership across each route was:

- Route 1: 5,548, a 24% increase over 2023;
- Route 2: 5,937, a 12% increase over 2023; and
- Route 3: 4,917, a 27% increase over 2023.

These ridership figures all represent double-digit increases over 2023. The PC Connect service continues to provide a valuable service across the County, and is now an essential service for many riders. Its continued growth is a testament to passenger reliance on the service for essential and discretionary trips.

Table 7 summarizes the key performance indicators of each of the routes, covering the revenue and costs for each route across a 12-month period. Even though the Rural Route was cancelled in 2025, this is included in the table below to assess its performance with the existing routes. Note that the billed hours for each route by the contractor are different from the actual service hours provided by each route. Because of this, the actual operating cost of the service is the same among Routes 1, 2, and 3.

For Routes 1-3, the 2024 calendar year data was used, while for the Rural Route, the final 12 months of operation were used (April 2024 to March 2025). Additional bulk ticket sales revenues represent approximately \$9,000 in annual revenue, bringing system-wide annual revenues to approximately \$150,000.

Table 7: PC Connect Route Performance Summary

Route	Operating Cost (12 month)	Revenue (12 month)	Cost Recovery Ratio	Ridership (12 month)	Avg. Monthly Ridership	Annual Service Hours	Fare
Rural Route	\$576,293	\$48,002	8%	8,034	670	4,474	\$6-\$12
Route 1	\$231,783	\$40,732	16%	5,548	462	2,688	\$6-\$12
Route 2	\$231,783	\$36,674	12%	5,937	495	3,078	\$6-\$12
Route 3	\$231,783	\$28,078	12%	4,917	410	2,398	\$6-\$12

Table 8 identifies the breakdown for fares on each of Route 1, 2, and 3 over 2024. Breakdowns in the table do not include bulk ticket sales, which are not individually reported. Primary findings from the fare breakdown suggest:

- Students are much more likely to take Route 2, which may be due to the location of University of Waterloo and Conestoga College campuses in Stratford and Waterloo Region;
- A large contingent (31%) of the Route 1 ridership is in the Country Sisters to Wallenstein segment of the route (i.e., the stops between Listowel and Elmira), which is anecdotally identified to be a popular segment among Anabaptist and Mennonite passengers;
- Around 20-23% of passengers on Routes 2 and 3 pay the cheaper St. Marys to Stratford fares, suggesting at minimum this is the share of people travelling between St. Marys and Stratford on these routes.

Table 8: Demographic Split for Fare Purchases Across PC Connect Routes, 2024

Fare Type	Route 1	Route 2	Route 3
Adults	20%	21%	27%
Seniors	14%	14%	16%
Students	33%	44%	25%
Country Sisters to Wallenstein	31%	N/A	N/A
St. Marys to Stratford Adults	N/A	20%	15%
St. Marys to Stratford Seniors	N/A	0%	7%
Other	1%	<1%	12%

4.1.1**Route 1**

PC Connect Route 1 currently operates between Listowel (North Perth) and Waterloo Region, providing a crucial regional connection between the municipality and the rest of the regional transit network. Within Waterloo Region, stops are made at key destinations like Conestoga Station and the Kitchener GO Station, allowing passengers to transfer between PC Connect, Grand River Transit, and GO Transit. Stops are made en route in towns along Highway 86, providing essential services to communities along the way.

Route 1 has seen ridership growth over previous years. Within North Perth, the route stops at the North Perth Public Library on all runs and stops at Listowel Technology Inc. on weekdays. The service supports local passengers within North Perth, other communities in Perth East, and riders originating in Waterloo Region.

Route 1 ridership by month is summarized in **Figure 3**. Generally, ridership along this route continues to grow and is successfully attracting new passengers. The fare payment demographics in **Table 8** suggest that this route is most popular among students and people living in the communities between Listowel and Elmira, who are predominantly in Mennonite communities. A future stop on this route at the Walmart in Listowel has been identified as a future opportunity to bring Mennonite passengers directly to a grocery store.

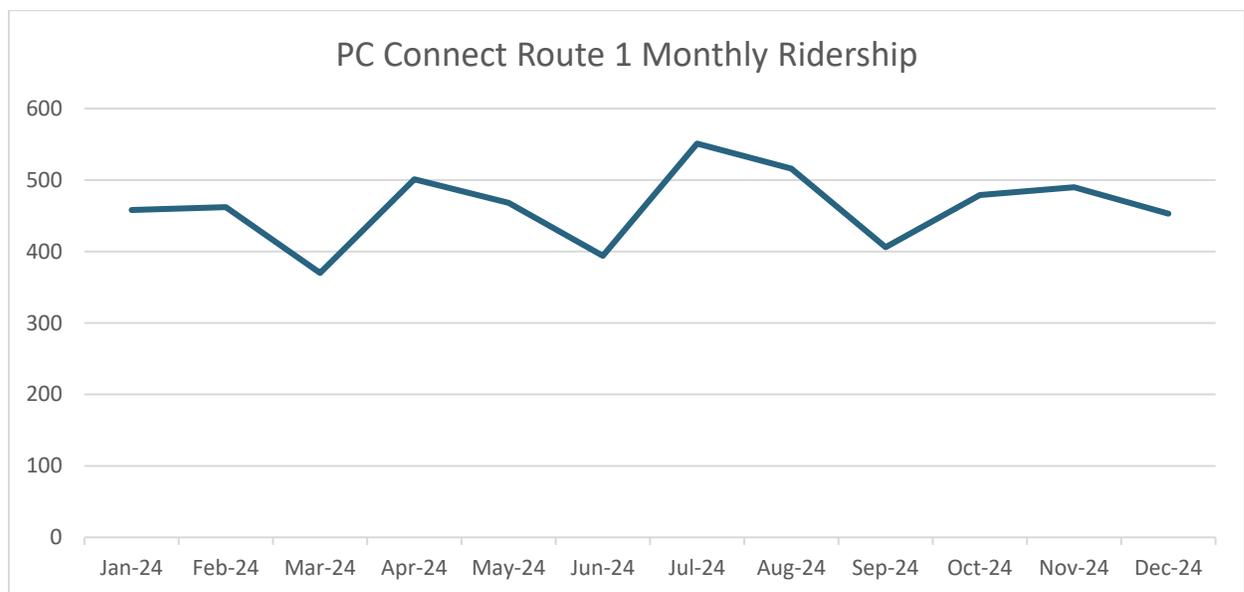


Figure 3: Monthly Ridership for PC Connect Route 1, 2024

4.1.2

Routes 2 and 3

PC Connect Routes 2 and 3 currently operate to St. Marys. Route 2 operates between Kitchener and St. Marys via Stratford, and Route 3 operates between London and Stratford via St. Marys. This results in combined service between St. Marys and Stratford with seven westbound trips on weekdays, and six eastbound trips, with additional service on these routes on Saturdays. Both routes stop at St. Marys Town Hall and St. Marys Memorial Hospital, and travel along Queen Street through the town. While this serves the Downtown and West areas of St. Marys, it leaves other areas of the town unserved or underserved.

Route 2 and 3 ridership by month for 2024 are shown in **Figure 4**. Ridership has generally increased, and while there is a dip in ridership in December, year-to-date data for 2025 identifies that the ridership has continued to increase year-over-year. Per the fare payment demographics in **Table 8**, these routes are

popular among students and a considerable portion of other passengers travelling between St. Marys and Stratford.

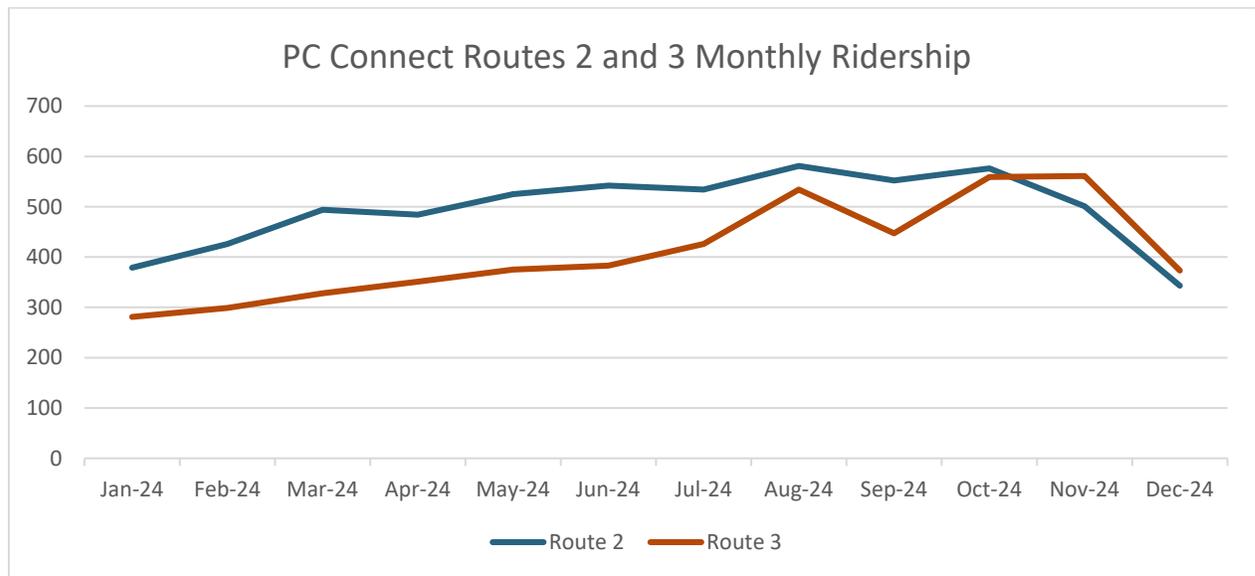


Figure 4: Monthly Ridership for PC Connect Routes 2 and 3, 2024

Because boarding and alighting data is not available per direction, ridership modelling was used to determine the likely direction of travel for trips to and from St. Marys. Across both Routes 2 and 3, it is estimated that between 25% to 35% of trips that start or stop in St. Marys are between London and St. Marys, and the remaining trips are between Stratford or Kitchener and St. Marys:

- Ridership on Route 2 is entirely directed to and from Stratford or Kitchener, since St. Marys is the western terminus of the route. In 2024, there were 1,655 trips between St. Marys and Stratford or Kitchener on weekdays, and 365 trips between St. Marys and Stratford or Kitchener on Saturdays.
- Ridership on Route 3 is split between London and Stratford. In 2024, there were 2,357 trips arriving in or departing from St. Marys on weekdays, and 444 trips arriving in or departing from St. Marys on weekends. Ridership demand modelling suggests that a small majority of these trips are more likely to be directed to and from London (around 1,260 trips on weekdays, around 230 trips on Saturday).

An estimated 11 passengers travel every weekday and Saturday between St. Marys and either Stratford or Kitchener, and an estimated 4.5 to 5 passengers travel every weekday and Saturday between St. Marys and London. Across the three trips per day on weekdays and Saturdays, the average per-trip boardings from and to St. Marys are:

- 0.9 boardings per trip from St. Marys to Stratford or Kitchener;
- 0.9 boardings per trip from Stratford or Kitchener to St. Marys;
- 0.9-1.0 boardings per trip from St. Marys to London; and
- 0.6-0.7 boardings per trip from London to St. Marys.

While the ridership on the route is higher due to the inclusion of Stratford to London and London to Stratford passengers, the productivity of the route is generally low and may warrant further investigation of travel times and evaluation of alternative options for best connecting St. Marys and Stratford.

4.1.3 Rural Route

North Perth was formerly also served by Route A (later known as the Rural Route) which operated in a loop connecting several smaller communities in North Perth, West Perth, and Perth East to Stratford. A more complete analysis of this route is provided in this report to understand which components were successful and could inform a new service connecting North Perth and Stratford. This service travelled along Highway 83 between Listowel and Mitchell, and stopped in the population centres of Gads Hill, Brunner, Milverton, Newton, Millbank, Listowel, Atwood, Monkton, and Mitchell. The Rural Route operated until the end of March 2025 when provincial funding ended, and Perth County ended support for PC Connect. The Rural Route schedule and map can be viewed in **Figure 5**.

The most popular stop on the Rural Route was the Stratford Transit Terminal. The other busiest stops were Mitchell, Listowel (Public Library), and Millbank. It was noted through operator observation, ridership data, and discussion with Stratford Transit and Perth County that:

- Very few passengers with mobility devices used the service;
- On-time performance was generally good, with some winter weather disruptions seasonally;
- Capacity of the service was sufficient to accommodate all passengers; and
- Seniors and youth made up a significant portion of the passenger base, including students travelling between towns.



MONDAY to FRIDAY											
Stratford Terminal	Gadshill	Brunner	Milverton	Newton	Millbank	Listowel	Listowel LTI	Atwood	Monkton	Mitchell	Stratford Terminal
6:00	→ 6:14	→ 6:25	→ 6:33	→ 6:40	→ 6:46	→ 7:10	→ 7:16	→ 7:23	→ 7:35	→ 7:50	→ 8:13
7:00	→ 7:14	→ 7:25	→ 7:33	→ 7:40	→ 7:46	→ 8:10	→ 8:16	→ 8:23	→ 8:35	→ 8:50	→ 9:13
10:28	← 10:14	← 10:03	← 9:55	← 9:48	← 9:42	← 9:18	← 9:12	← 9:05	← 8:53	← 8:38	← 8:15
12:13	← 11:59	← 11:48	← 11:40	← 11:33	← 11:27	← 11:03	← 10:57	← 10:50	← 10:38	← 10:23	← 10:00
12:30	→ 12:44	→ 12:55	→ 1:03	→ 1:10	→ 1:16	→ 1:40	→ 1:46	→ 1:53	→ 2:05	→ 2:20	→ 2:43
2:30	→ 2:44	→ 2:55	→ 3:03	→ 3:10	→ 3:16	→ 3:40	→ 3:46	→ 3:53	→ 4:05	→ 4:20	→ 4:43
5:28	← 5:14	← 5:03	← 4:55	← 4:48	← 4:42	← 4:18	← 4:12	← 4:05	← 3:53	← 3:38	← 3:15
7:13	← 6:59	← 6:48	← 6:40	← 6:33	← 6:27	← 6:03	← 5:57	← 5:50	← 5:38	← 5:23	← 5:00

SATURDAY											
Stratford Terminal	Gadshill	Brunner	Milverton	Newton	Millbank	Listowel	Listowel LTI	Atwood	Monkton	Mitchell	Stratford Terminal
9:00	→ 9:14	→ 9:25	→ 9:33	→ 9:40	→ 9:46	→ 10:10	→ 10:16	→ 10:23	→ 10:35	→ 10:50	→ 11:13
11:15	→ -	→ -	→ -	→ -	→ -	→ 12:00	→ -	→ -	→ -	→ 12:30	→ 12:45
4:28	← 4:14	← 4:03	← 3:55	← 3:48	← 3:42	← 3:18	← 3:12	← 3:05	← 2:53	← 2:38	← 2:15

Figure 5: PC Connect Rural Route Map and Schedule

This route saw an average of 674 boardings per month (Figure 6), with notable demand patterns of commuters travelling to Stratford in the morning and returning in the evening. Ridership on Saturdays was less than 50% of weekday ridership, though only three trips operated on Saturdays (compared to eight on weekdays). The busiest weekdays were Thursday and Friday (Figure 7), with an average of 131 and 145 boardings (on a monthly basis), respectively.

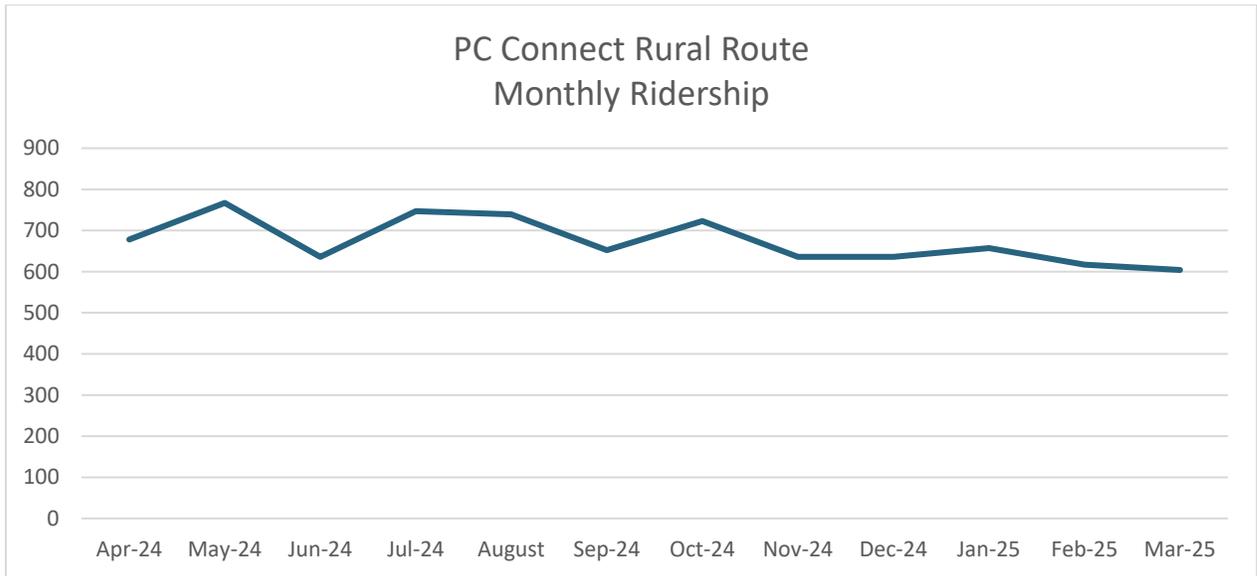


Figure 6: Monthly Ridership for PC Connect Rural Route, April 2024 to March 2025

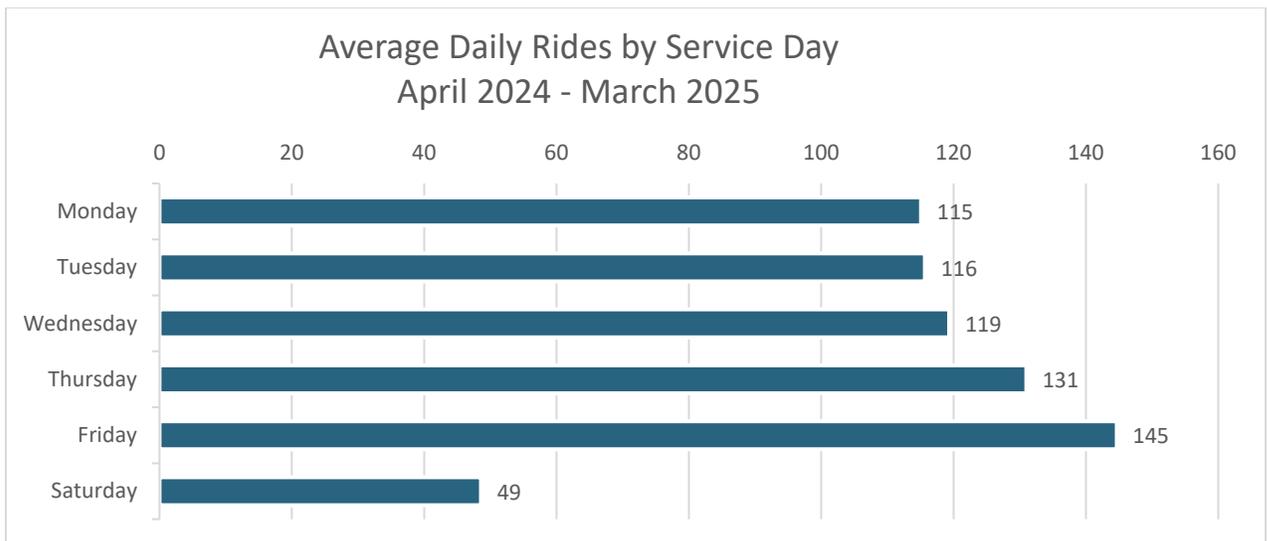


Figure 7: Average Daily Rural Route Rides, April 2024 to March 2025

To better understand the travel patterns along the Rural Route, ridership data from the month of May 2024 (the month with the highest ridership along the route) was used for detailed demand analysis, as shown in **Figure 8**. Ridership declined in the later months of the service, and it is possible that this was because of the impending cancellation of the route, so individuals may have started to explore other ways to travel instead, and ridership ended the trend of consistent year-over-year growth. Across the entire month, there was a total ridership of 767 trips. Of these trips, 733 occurred on weekdays, representing 95% of monthly ridership. Data for the final months of service in 2025 suggest a similar ridership distribution, with Stratford, Mitchell, Listowel, Millbank, and Milverton being the stops with the highest demand. The highest ridership stop was the Stratford Cooper Terminal, which is the terminus of both ends of the route. Stop data indicates that passengers tended to prefer the direct trips between Stratford, Mitchell, and Listowel. Also notable was the higher ridership in Milverton and Millbank, an area with a high percentage of Anabaptist and Mennonite residents who actively used the service in East Perth.

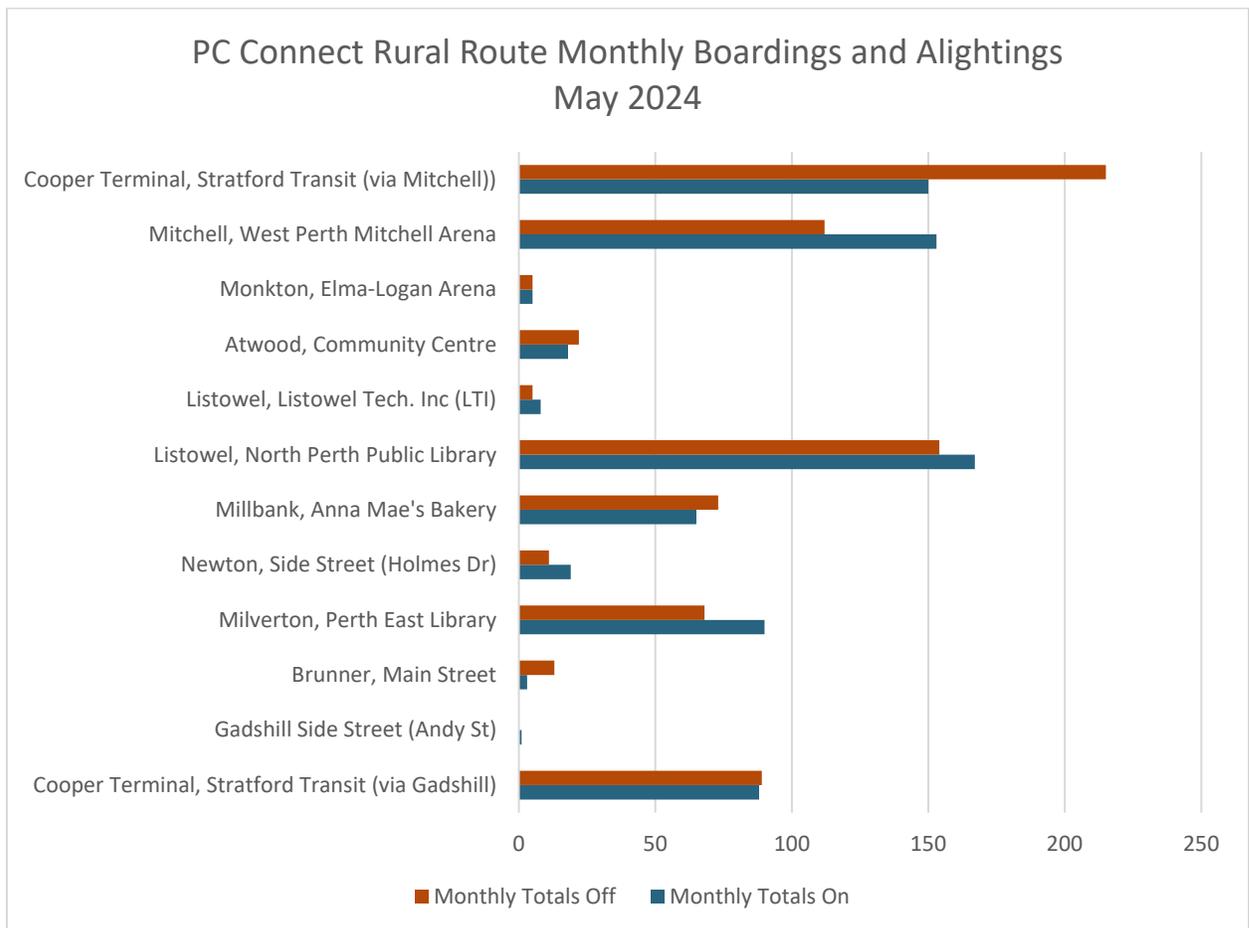


Figure 8: Rural Route Boardings and Alightings, May 2024

The four most popular trips arrived in Stratford at 8:13 a.m. and 2:13 p.m., and departed Stratford at 3:15 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. The most popular stops along every trip were Mitchell and Listowel, followed by Milverton and Millbank. It is likely the dominant use of this service was for commutes, particularly since the 08:13 trip to Stratford was the busiest of all trips.

4.2 Specialized Transportation Services

Within North Perth and St. Marys, there are two operators of specialized transit that service their respective area: Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) Transportation Perth-Huron in North Perth, and St. Marys and Area Mobility Service within St. Marys and surrounding areas. Both of these services operate through the EasyRide family of systems, using the central booking software provided through ONE CARE Home and Community Support Services. Trips across both systems are largely pre-booked but some same-day trips can be accommodate depending on driver availability.

4.2.1 Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) Transportation

VON is a healthcare provider specializing in a range of home care services, including assisted living services, public health-related initiatives, and in certain areas, specialized transportation. VON primarily provides trips for medical-related travel to seniors and adults with disabilities who would otherwise be unable to travel to and from essential medical care services, grocery stores, adult day programs, and other appointments. VON Transportation in North Perth falls under the Perth-Huron branch of the organization.

While VON covers a wide service area, most trips occur or originate in Listowel. The service uses three accessible vehicles with paid drivers and around ten volunteer drivers for longer trips. These vehicles are also stored in Listowel. Volunteer transportation fares are charged at a rate of \$0.53 per kilometre, and accessible transportation fees range from a flat rate of \$5 one-way to \$0.80 per kilometre for out of town trips. VON has some regularly scheduled trips but also accommodates last-minute trips as resources allow.

4.2.2 St. Marys and Area Mobility Service

St. Marys and Area Mobility Service (St. Marys Mobility) is the local accessible mobility service based in St. Marys. To qualify for the service, individuals must reside in St. Marys, Perth South, or the surrounding areas of Zorra Township or Thames Centre, and must meet one of the following criteria:

- An older adult or senior over 55 years;
- Require access to an accessible vehicle to accommodate an assistive device (i.e., wheelchair, walker, scooter);
- Are recovering from an injury or illness and require accessible transportation for a short period of time;
- Are living with a disability and would benefit from supportive transportation to get around; and/or
- Receive funding for transportation costs through a third party or government program.

The service operates with a mix of staff and volunteer drivers. The staff drivers use the accessible cutaway vehicles, and the volunteer drivers use their personal vehicles. Fares are collected on a distance basis; and clients are invoiced monthly. In-town trips are \$5, and out-of-town trips use the metred rate. Wait time charges apply depending on the circumstances. The service is jointly funded by fares, private sponsors and non-profit organizations including the Rotary, Lions Club, St. Marys Healthcare Foundation, and government bodies including the Ontario Ministry of Health, the Town of St. Marys, the Township of Zorra, the Township of Perth South, the Municipality of Thames Centre, and is further partnered with the Mitchell & Area Community Outreach and Mobility Bus, ONE Care, and VON Perth-Huron.

Notably, St. Marys Mobility receives a significant percentage of its operational funding through the combined gas tax shares of the municipalities it serves. By combining the population and ridership from all of the municipalities they serve, St. Marys Mobility is allocated a larger percentage of funding than they would be if they only operated within St. Marys.

St. Marys Mobility also operates fixed trips on a regular basis:

- On Wednesday mornings, St. Marys Mobility operates a shopping shuttle service for \$5. Stops are made at multiple locations within St. Marys, including the Independent Grocer, Foodland, Downtown, and McDonald's. This initiative indicates that there is demand for internal transit service to access essential services like grocers, and the regularity of the service provides some routine for passengers. The service is provided door-to-door, picking up pre-booked passengers up at their home and dropping them off after the shopping is complete.
- On the first Monday of each month, St. Marys Mobility provides a Stratford shopping trip for \$12. Passengers are dropped off at the Festival Marketplace at 10:00 a.m. and return at 3:00 p.m.

4.3 Other Transportation Providers

There are several other regional transportation providers that service North Perth and St. Marys. Some services, like coach lines and VIA Rail, focus primarily on intercity and regional travel, whereas the taxis primarily serve local destinations or connections to larger population centres like Stratford or Kitchener.

4.3.1 VIA Rail

VIA Rail stops in St. Marys once per day per direction, with one train to Toronto via Kitchener and Stratford every day at 10:45 a.m., and one train to Sarnia via London every day at 8:27 p.m. Pricing is variable, depending how early a passenger books their trip in advance, how long their trips is, and overall demand along the route. Trains are frequently delayed due to freight train traffic, and coupled with infrequent service, are unable to meet the demand for all regional and inter-city trips.

4.3.2 Taxi and Rideshare Companies

There are two taxi companies that operate in North Perth. Listowel Taxi and Tj's Taxi (Listowel) operate within the municipality and provide both metred and fixed-price taxi trips. In St. Marys, Stonetown Taxi recently began providing service and is considered a significant asset to the Town.

Uber advertises service in all municipalities in Perth County on their website, including in St. Marys and North Perth. Discussions with municipal staff and members of the community indicated that Uber does not actively operate in either municipality and is not a regularly used alternative for travel. A lookup of booking options on a weekday morning through the Uber app indicated that there were drivers actively operating within Listowel at the time of looking and that longer wait times were expected in St. Marys, but an option for pickup was available even for internal trips. Uber advertises five popular destinations accessed by Uber riders in each municipality:

- Kitchener GO, Conestoga Station, Sportsworld, and other destinations in Waterloo Region were identified as popular destinations in North Perth; and
- Masonville Place, Kitchener GO, the London VIA Rail station, and other destinations in Waterloo Region and London were identified as popular destinations in St. Marys.

There is one taxi company which operates in St. Marys. Stonetown taxi operates primarily in St. Marys but will bring passengers outside of the town as required. Fares depend on distance to travel, and the service operates 24 hours.

Uber's operations within the study areas remain unclear. Further engagement with municipal officials found that they are waiting until municipal taxi licensing is more streamlined before expanding further into rural communities.

4.3.3 Former Transportation Options

Several private coach operators and one public agency have previously operated within North Perth and St. Marys. Two of the more recent examples are Aboutown Transportation in North Perth, connecting primarily north to Huron County, and ONEXBUS in St. Marys, connecting east-west to larger cities in the region.

4.3.3.1 ONEXBUS

ONEXBUS is a private intercity coach line that operates a route between Toronto and London via Kitchener and Stratford. This route also used to stop in St. Marys, but this stop was discontinued due to low ridership. Stratford continues to be serviced by this route 2-3 times per day per direction at the Cooper Street Transit Terminal.

4.3.3.2 Aboutown Transportation

Up until the 2010s, Aboutown Transportation operated several coach routes which served Listowel/North Perth. This includes:

- NL2, which operated between Owen Sound, Hanover, Listowel, and Kitchener 5 days/week; and
- NL3, which operated between Wingham, Listowel, and Stratford 6 days/week.

Typically, one daily round trip was operated per route. The company also owned several taxi operations across southwestern Ontario. This service was discontinued around when Aboutown went into receivership in 2013.

4.3.3.3 GO Transit

GO Transit previously operated a once daily round trip from London to Toronto as an extension of the GO Transit Kitchener Line. The train operated to serve the commuter market, departing early in the morning en route to Toronto Union Station and returning in the late evening. The train stopped at St. Marys VIA Rail station and was AODA-compliant. The line faced issues, including long travel times due to poor rail right-of-way conditions. However, it still provided a reliable and affordable commuter service for individuals travelling to the nearby urban centres, complementing other regional transportation operators like PC Connect. This service ended October 2023.

5.0 Peer Review

To better understand what potential service delivery models could work best for North Perth and St. Marys, several peer agencies have been chosen to provide baseline reference both in terms of ridership and regarding financial and operational performance. The transit services in **Table 9** were chosen as they represent smaller municipalities, generally with a mix of population centres and rural areas, and because they represent a variety of operational models. Metrics for these systems were obtained from the 2023 Ontario Urban Transit Fact Book. There are many ways by which a transit system can be operated, so by reviewing all realistic and potential options, a better understanding of the expected cost and ridership ranges for services in either municipality can be determined.

Table 9: Peer Transit Service Comparison

Locale	Innisfil	Norfolk County	Prince Edward County	Owen Sound	Bancroft
Service Model	Ride-hailing	On-demand and fixed-route	Fixed-route & on-demand	Fixed-route	By reservation (pre-booked)
Population	43,326	33,500	7,000	21,612	16,195
Service Hours	50,455	5,875	3,685	13,752	3,800
Service Hours per Capita	1.2	0.2	0.5	0.6	0.2
Ridership	132,209	16,752	5,870	179,669	12,087
Ridership per Capita	3.1	0.5	0.8	8.3	0.7
Ridership per Service Hour	2.6	2.9	1.6	13.1	3.2
Operating Cost	\$1,975,314	\$554,747	\$170,250	\$1,393,802	\$152,176
Hourly Operating Cost	\$39.20	\$94.40	\$46.20	\$91.27	\$40.00
Operating Cost per Capita	\$45.60	\$16.60	\$24.30	\$30.01	\$9.40
Operating Revenue	\$738,128	\$65,003	\$23,954	\$379,703	\$60,024
Net Operating Cost	\$1,237,186	\$489,744	\$146,296	\$1,014,099	\$92,125
Average Fare	\$5.58	\$3.58	\$4.08	\$1.95	\$4.25
R/C Ratio	37%	12%	14%	27%	39%
Service Hours	24 hours/day	M-F 7:30 a.m.- 6:00 p.m.	M-F 6:30 a.m.- 6:30 p.m.	M-F 6:30 a.m.- 6:00 p.m., Sat 9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.	M-F 8:30 a.m.- 4:30 p.m., S/S 8:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m.

Key findings across the peer agency metrics include:

- Service hours per capita for peer systems generally ranged from 0.2 to 0.6 service hours per capita, which loosely aligned to 10 to 45 service hours per day on average, without accounting for differences in weekday to weekend service. Innisfil generally provided much higher service hours per capita at a higher cost to both the municipality and the passengers;
- Ridership tended to be between 1.6 and 3.2 boardings per service hour and between 0.5 to 3.1 boardings per capita, with Owen Sound having a much higher boardings per service hour and boardings per capita than peer agencies;
- Operating cost can vary substantially based on the operating model:
 - Prince Edward County and Bancroft run off of a community transit model through a non-profit organization with volunteer drivers, so have lower operating costs;
 - Innisfil subsidizes Uber rides, so the hourly operating cost is challenging to compare, since Innisfil covers the cost difference for the passenger between the Uber ride and the target fare; and
 - Norfolk County and Owen Sound operate transit using paid drivers, and their costs are generally in line with a typical rural transit system. The current PC Connect service has a similar hourly cost for contracted service.
- Cost recovery ratios generally were between 10% and 40% for peer systems; and
- The average fare was generally between \$3.50 and \$5.50, with Owen Sound having a much lower average fare at \$1.95.

As a foundational planning strategy, most of the peer agencies prioritize coverage and accessibility by providing on-demand service and essential regional fixed-route connections. Some organizations, like Innisfil Transit, provide additional flexibility by using ride-hailing or taxi services to supplement or replace traditional transit services.

There are trade-offs between providing total area coverage, which can be less efficient but provide service to everyone, and focusing on higher-demand corridors, which are more efficient but limit service to larger destinations. During certain time periods of low demand, or where there are many disaggregated origins and destinations of trips, on-demand service can be sufficient, but when there are high-demand corridors with a high possibility of trip-sharing, a fixed-route service may be more appropriate. This is seen in Norfolk County and Prince Edward County, where a mix of on-demand and fixed routes are operated depending on demand levels. Operations using mixed-service delivery methods can also allow for a higher level of flexibility and scalability but can be more complex to operate and for passengers to understand depending on the operating model.

The key performance measurements of these operations, in addition to the ridership and costs associated with the PC Connect service, allow for insights on what kind of expenditures, cost recovery, and ridership may be expected. For example:

- The previous Rural Route had an estimated cost recovery ratio close to 8%, which is lower than peer agencies. The other three operating PC Connect routes have cost recovery ratios between 12-16%. Systems with higher cost recovery ratios may have a smaller operating area (e.g., only within a designated population centre) or have removed costs in some way (e.g., by having volunteer drivers). Generally, it is not uncommon for rural systems to have a cost recovery ratio toward the bottom of this range, since there are lower populations with longer distances to travel than in urban areas, but a minimum level of service that is still required to attract ridership.
- The fare structure used by PC Connect is generally in line with how other mixed local and intercommunity services operate. Fares for long-distance trips are higher and fares for local trips are cheaper in many peer systems. A fare structure that accounts for local travel within a community like Listowel or St. Marys, and for travel outside of the community at different rates, balances the need for cost recovery with the cost impact on the system for different types of trips.
- Ridership on the PC Connect routes has continued to grow as people have adapted to the systems. Ridership per service hour on the Rural Route was around 0.15 boardings per service hour, and on the continuing routes is between 0.08 and 0.10 boardings per service hour. These will likely continue to increase but have not yet reached the level of the peer systems. It should be noted that the Rural Route ran twice as many service hours as the continuing routes do, and that generally there is some increase to ridership as service hours increase as the service becomes more desirable.

It is also important to note that some of these agencies are currently undergoing work to study whether their current service delivery models are adequate. For example, Innisfil is currently looking at whether fixed-route service could appropriately meet the needs of some of the higher-demand trips (namely, regional connections), and Norfolk County, despite transitioning to largely on-demand, kept the fixed route from Simcoe to Brantford.

6.0

Community Engagement

Engagement is a central component to the development of this plan to ensure that any proposed transit would support the needs of residents and support the future visions of cities as presented by consulted stakeholders. As part of engagement, a variety of methods were used including an online survey, stakeholder meetings, public open houses, and engagement with local elected leaders. This plan has been developed in close partnership with municipal staff in both North Perth and St. Marys, leveraging existing relationships within the community and being proactive to consult relevant organizations which could benefit or be impacted by changes to transit in the municipalities.

6.1

General Feedback

Across all engagement activities, there was an overall desire for new transit coverage. Individuals shared how much PC Connect had improved the quality of life for individuals with limited transportation options, including seniors and youth. In the smaller communities formerly served by the PC Connect Rural Route, it was noted that significant gaps now exist for individuals to reach essential services, social outings, school, and employment. However, numerous concerns were heard around the potential cost of transit service, especially with the removal of funding through Perth County.

In St. Marys, there was an identified need for a focus on internal trips not currently being met by the PC Connect service, St. Marys and Area Mobility Service, or the local taxi service. While it was noted that the taxi service has been a huge asset to the community, it is important to note that taxi service and/or fares are not accessible to all transit users, and that some gaps remain when considering the actual demand for internal transportation options.

Across both municipalities, there is a tension between the needs of regional transit network connectivity and internal travel options, though in the urban context of St. Marys and the rural context of North Perth, the actual service delivery model may differ based on demand and travel needs.

In addition to the online surveys shared through the Municipality of North Perth and the Town of St. Marys, individual stakeholders were contacted for their feedback and input on specific aspects of transit service. Stakeholder feedback is aggregated in the respective sections below, and includes feedback from representatives of:

- Social services, community outreach, and senior services staff in the Municipality of North Perth, Town of St. Marys, and City of Stratford;
- United Way;
- VON Transportation;
- St. Marys & Area Mobility Service;
- Huron Perth Student Transportation Services;

- Huron-Perth Public Health;
- Stratford Transit; and
- Perth County.

Employers in St. Marys and North Perth were also contacted, with some responses received concerning facility sizes and general shift times. Medical stakeholders were also contacted in North Perth, but responses were not received at the time of publishing this report.

6.2 North Perth Feedback

Feedback received from North Perth was largely in the context of the recent changes to PC Connect service, better serving the commuter and regional travel demands to Waterloo Region and Stratford, and improving local travel options.

6.2.1 Online Survey Summary

Over 250 responses were received through an online survey that was published through the Municipality of North Perth website. The survey was advertised through the Municipality's website and Facebook pages. Seventy percent (70%) of survey respondents lived in Listowel, with the balance living in Atwood (8.5%) and across other areas of the municipality or identifying that they travel to North Perth frequently. Twenty-six percent (26%) of respondents did not own a vehicle.

Respondents were asked about their existing use of various transportation options in North Perth (**Figure 9**). Nineteen percent (19%) of respondents indicated that they had used PC Connect service previously, and 40% had used taxi service. Of the people who were familiar with PC Connect, fares and accessibility were highly rated, and all other aspects were evaluated on neutrally or slightly negatively.

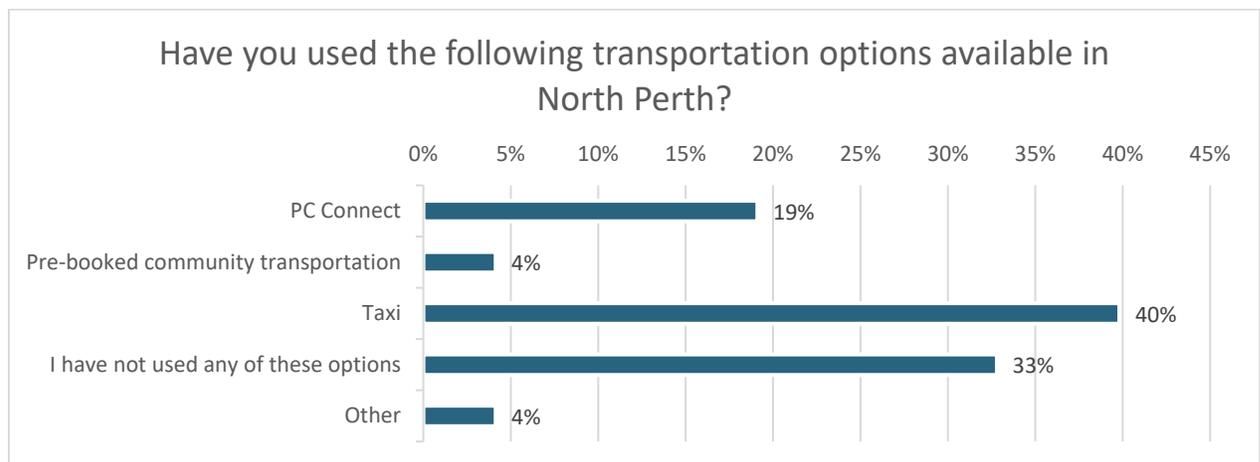


Figure 9: Usage of Existing Transportation Options in North Perth

The most popular destinations identified internal to North Perth were Listowel and Atwood, each with over 40% of respondents indicating some travel need to these communities. The next most popular destinations were Monkton (29%) and Gowanstown (26%). Notably, the former PC Connect Rural Route used to serve both Atwood and Monkton and all of these destinations are along the Highway 23 corridor. Within Listowel, all areas except for the east part had over 50% of respondents indicate travel need to those areas.

The most popular destinations identified external to North Perth were Waterloo (68%), Kitchener (65%), Stratford (65%), other parts of Waterloo Region (54%), London (50%), Huron County (50%), Palmerston (47%), and southern Wellington County (46%). Respondents indicated the highest interest in travel more than once a week to Waterloo, Kitchener, Stratford, Palmerston, and other areas in Waterloo Region.

The majority of travel demand was indicated to be during the weekdays (**Figure 10**), from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and on weekends from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. 40% stated they would consider using an internal service within North Perth, whereas 53% would consider using the service for farther trips to destinations like Stratford. Interest in internal trips was primarily for a mixture of errands, social, and recreational activities; while interest in external trips was more strongly indicated to be for errands, followed by recreational activities and medical appointments.

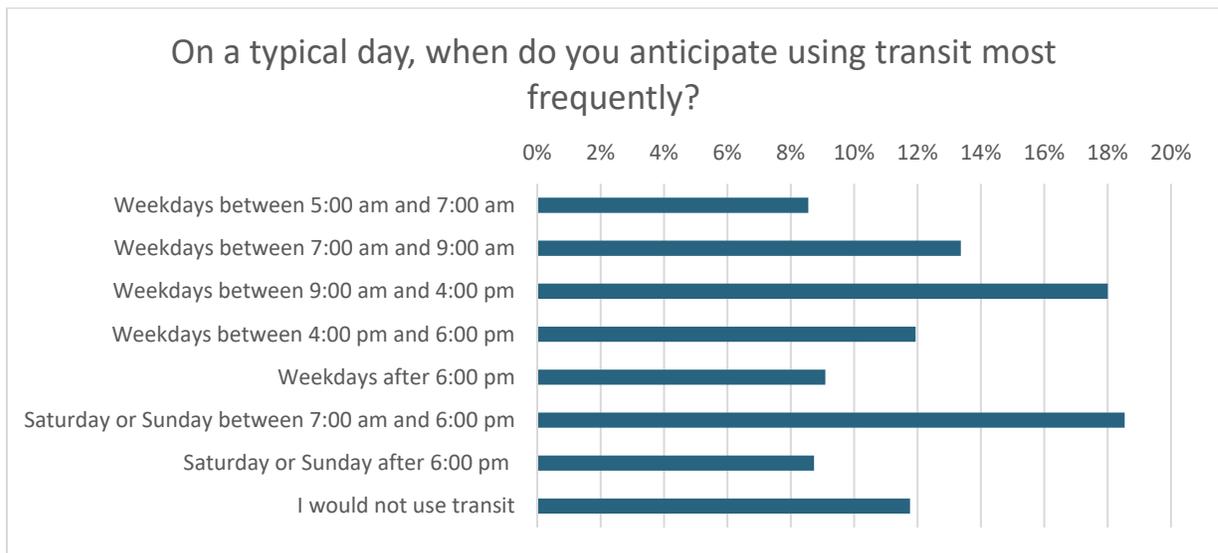


Figure 10: North Perth Transit Demand by Time Period

Most respondents preferred the fixed route option over other service delivery models (**Figure 11**). As North Perth already has PC Connect fixed route service, it would be plausible for respondents to prefer the service type that they are already familiar with. Responses were compared between Listowel and more rural communities and generally found a comparable preference for fixed-route no matter the community of origin. Respondents also heavily favoured affordability as the most important trait of the

service (Figure 12), followed by operating at least 5 days per week and the service having good access to areas outside of North Perth.

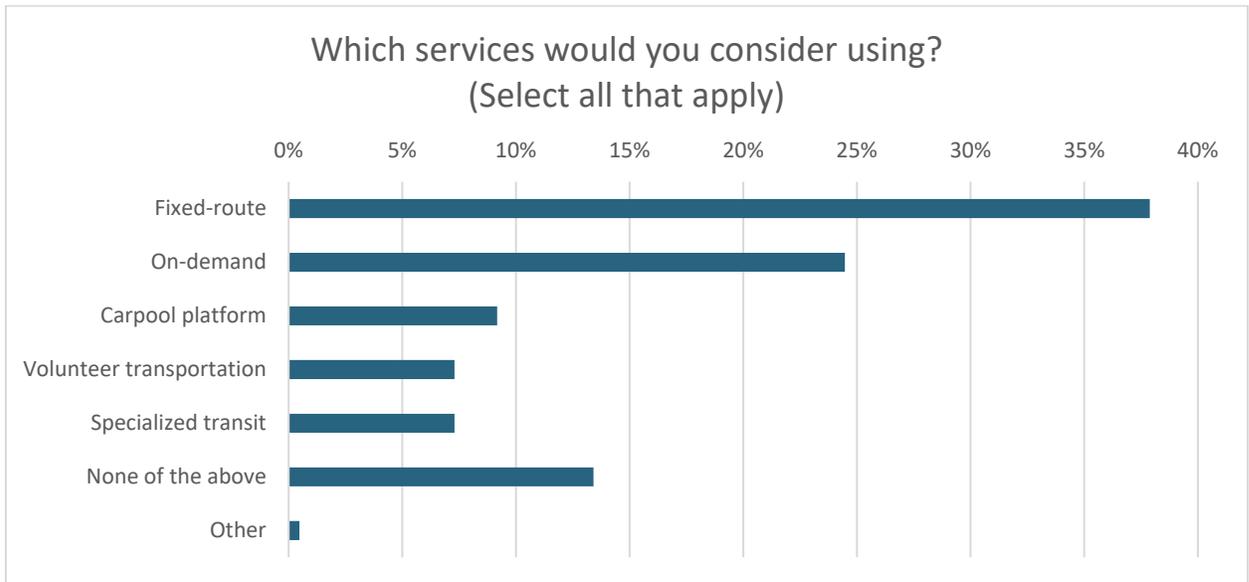


Figure 11: North Perth Service Model Preferences

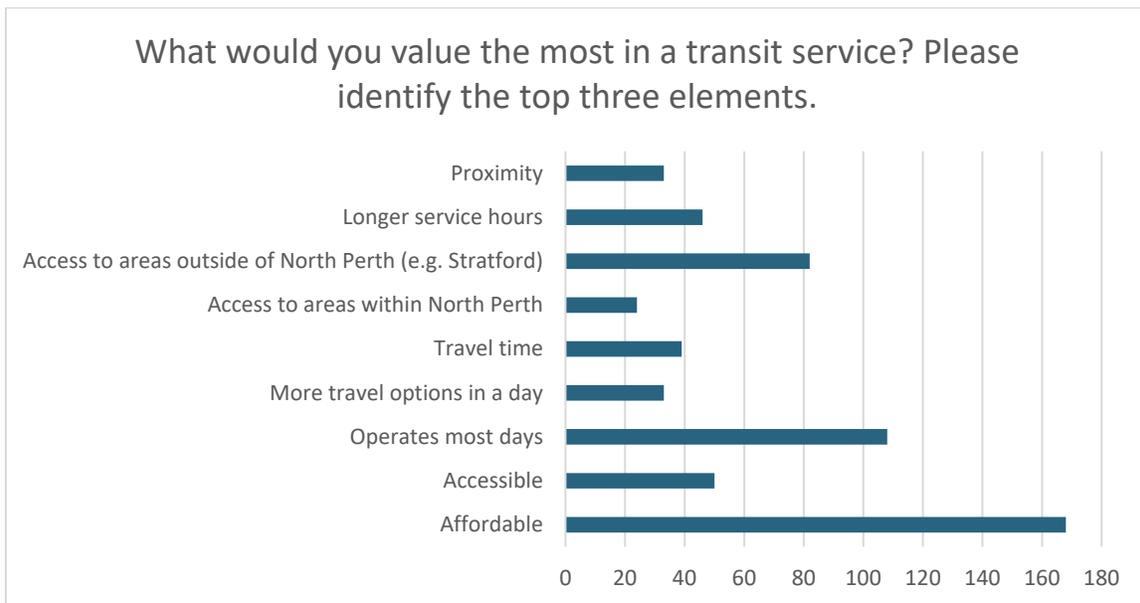


Figure 12: North Perth Transit Service Values

Open comments from the survey covered the following themes:

- A lack of a current need or desire to use the transit service that may change as residents age;
- Concerns regarding potential tax increases to residents and the cost to provide the service from the municipality;
- Concern that the cancellation of the Rural Route has left many individuals more isolated, including youth and seniors who now do not have access to an independent means of transportation;
- A sense of isolation in the rural population centres of the municipality off the major corridors;
- The importance of serving the commuter market, which includes better connections to Waterloo Region, Grand River Transit (GRT), and GO Transit in Kitchener. Issues were identified around paying separate fares for GRT and PC Connect;
- Some preferences for rural on-demand transit coverage, especially in areas no longer served by the Rural Route; and
- Support for improved access to public transit, which includes consideration for individuals with no other means of transportation, as well as residents most reliant on public transportation who do not own private automobiles.

The demographics of survey respondents were mixed, with representation from all age groups. 5% of respondents stated they have a disability which could make using a fixed route challenging, and 8% said they do not have a smartphone with a data plan.

6.2.2 Stakeholder Engagement

Throughout engagement with community stakeholders in North Perth, a number of key themes emerged regarding existing and potential transit service options.

6.2.2.1 PC Connect and Current Mobility Options

- The existing Route 1 provides a valuable service that serves several markets, including commuters to Waterloo Region, reverse commuters from Waterloo Region to Listowel, Mennonite communities along Highway 86, and individuals accessing essential services in Kitchener; and
- Additional service along Route 1, and service along the former Rural Route corridor between Listowel, Mitchell, and Stratford may meet some of the additionally identified passenger demands.

6.2.2.2 Demographic, Destinations, and Equity Considerations

- Losing the PC Connect Rural Route has significant negative impacts on affected riders, including youth and seniors;
- Atwood was identified as a community with a recent influx of residents who are more likely to depend on transit service to get to Listowel;
- Concern over access to and from Stratford for people who need to access social services; and
- Anabaptist and Mennonite communities should be considered when planning rural services.

6.2.2.3

Service Design Feedback

- There is support for internal transportation within North Perth, both rural and in Listowel;
- There are cost concerns around providing more transit service;
- Concerns around the coverage of rural areas in North Perth;
- Consideration of micromobility or improvements to active transportation as a method to improve connectivity;
- Specialized trips are currently being met by VON Transportation Perth-Huron, and any additional transit service should balance with what VON Transportation currently provides; and
- Interest in stops at Goderich-to-Guelph rail trail crossings.

6.3

St. Marys Feedback

Throughout engagement in St. Marys, the importance of both internal and regional transit connections was heard within the broader demand for more travel options for the town.

6.3.1

Online Survey Summary

An online survey was completed by the Town of St. Marys which was advertised on the town's website and Facebook page. Over 230 responses were received to the survey. Most respondents indicated that they live in the north and southeast areas of town. Approximately 20% of respondents indicated that they do not have access to a vehicle.

Respondents were asked about their existing use of various transportation options in St. Marys (**Figure 13**). Over 55% of respondents said that they had previously used VIA Rail, while around 16% indicated they had previously used PC Connect. For those who have previously used PC Connect, respondents generally liked the accessibility of the service, the affordable fare, and the days it operated. The coverage within St. Marys and service hours were more generally disliked.

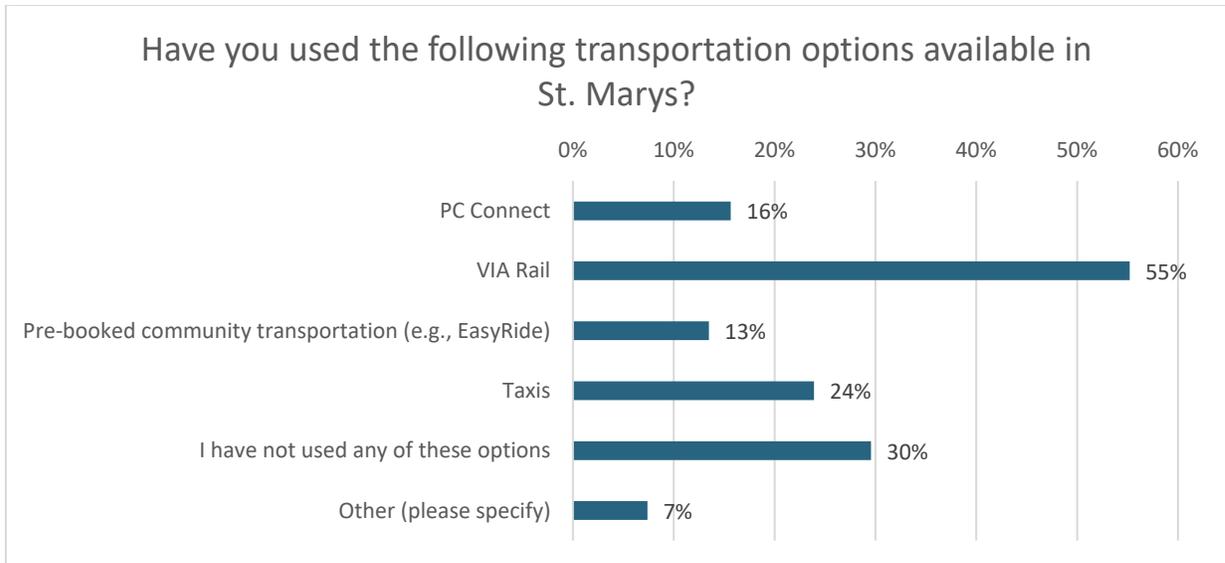


Figure 13: Usage of Existing Transportation Options in St. Marys

The most popular demands within town were Downtown (61%), the Pyramid Recreation Centre area (58%), the area near the St. Marys Golf and Country Club (57%), the west area between St. Marys Memorial Hospital and Downtown (56%), and the other areas adjacent to Downtown (52%).

Respondents generally said they would travel 1-3 times per week to these destinations, with higher daily demands to the Downtown and Pyramid Recreation Centre.

The most popular external destinations indicated were Stratford (77%), London (77%), and Waterloo Region (55%). Between Stratford and London, daily demand was anticipated to be slightly higher to Stratford than to London, which aligns with the ridership patterns identified in the existing service.

Demand is largely for weekdays from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and weekends (**Figure 14**). Some respondents stated they would appreciate a service to/from Stratford on theatre days, as well as an evening service (particularly to prevent drinking and driving on Fridays and Saturdays). Internal demand for transit was primarily driven by shopping, recreational activities, accessing medical appointments, and accessing regional transportation; while external demand was primarily driven by shopping and recreational activities.

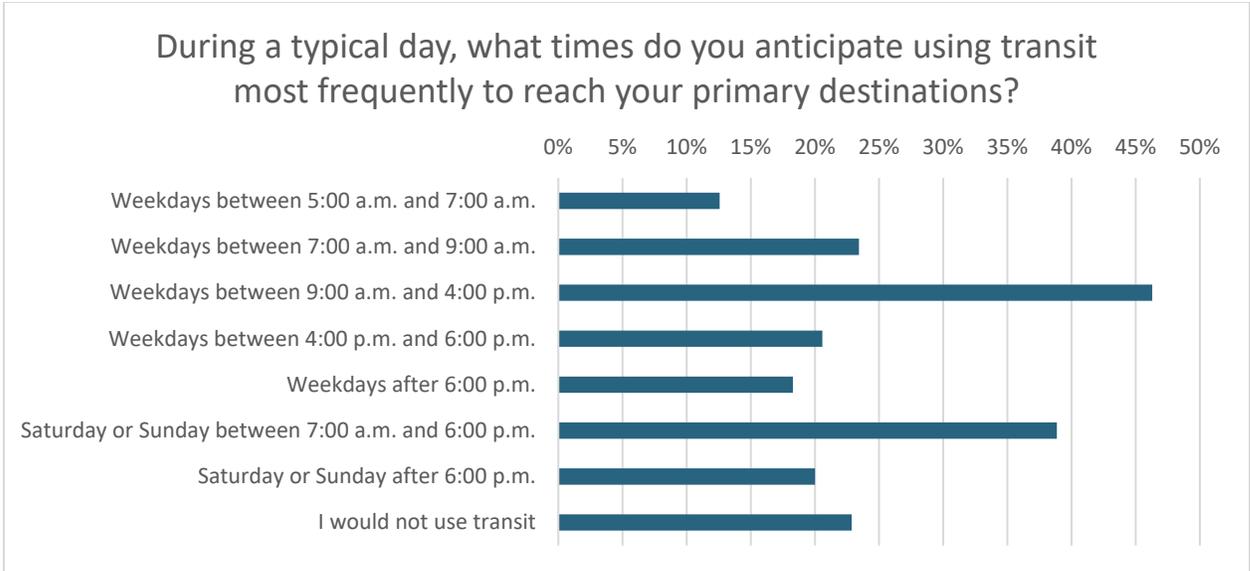


Figure 14: St. Marys Transit Demand by Time Period

Most respondents indicated they preferred a fixed route option (**Figure 15**), while a lower number preferred on-demand service. Some comments cited fixed routes as easier to plan and schedule around, including for medical appointments. Respondents found affordability to be the most important value (**Figure 16**), followed by operating most days, and access to areas outside of St. Marys.

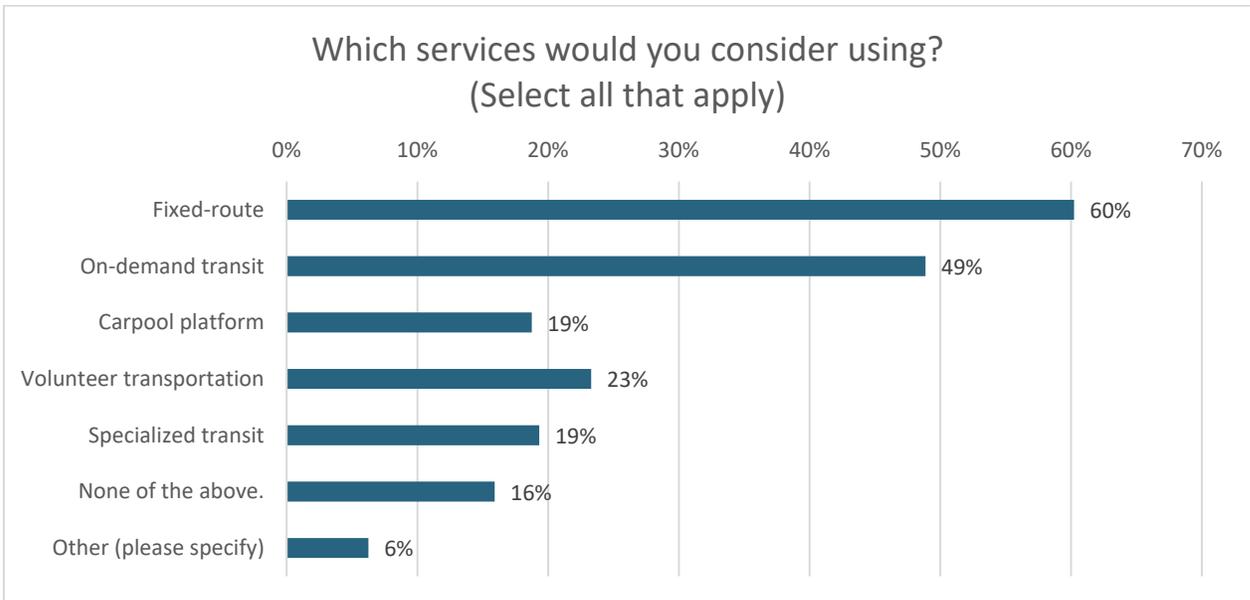


Figure 15: St. Marys Service Model Preferences

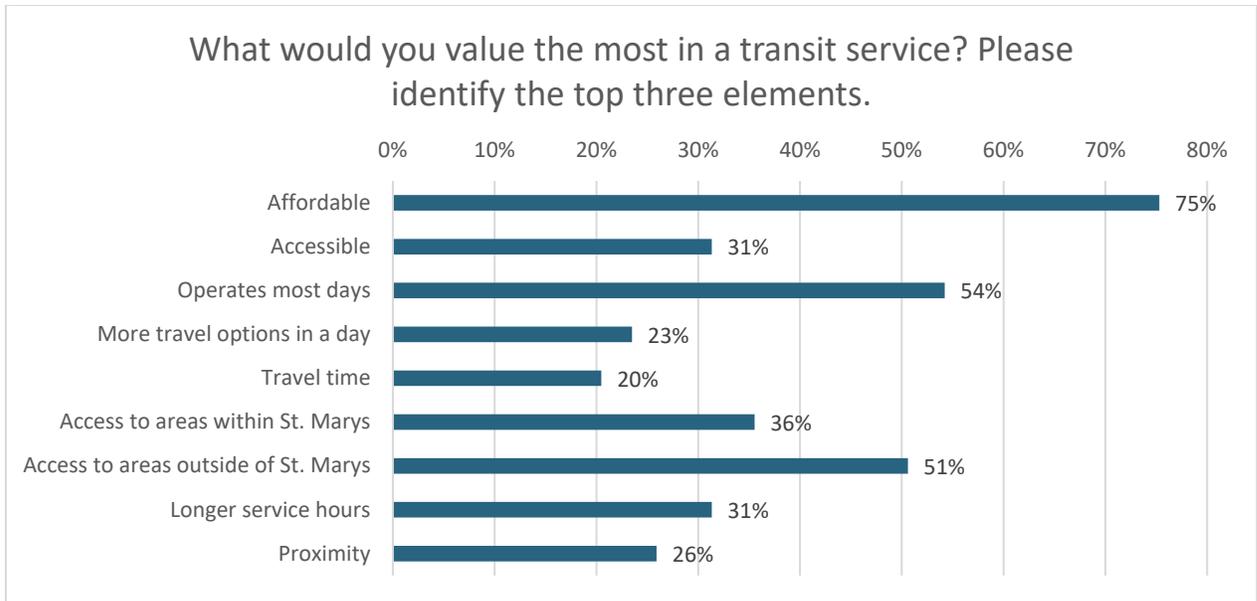


Figure 16: St. Marys Transit Service Values

The majority of survey respondents were seniors. Fifteen percent (15%) of respondents identified having mobility challenges, and 10% did not have a smartphone with data. Many respondents indicated that while they might not need transit now, they might use the service in the future. However, some do not support the initiative due to tax and cost concerns from the municipal perspective.

Comments on regional transit included:

- The current VIA Rail service, with one trip per direction per day, is considered inadequate;
- There is a desire to study whether Stratford Transit could operate the recommended transit service to allow for integration between the two towns;
- Important to improve GO Transit connections because of the recent removal of the GO Transit service to London; and
- The importance of preserving the connection to London currently provided by Route 3.

Some respondents highlighted that it is not only seniors who could use this service, because the increasing cost of living affects everyone, and transit can help make life more affordable across broad demographics.

Comments about the taxi service were heard numerous times during engagement, and how it is important to preserve the taxi service which has filled an important gap in the town. That being said, it was noted by other respondents that the taxi service is not perfect, and that there remain gaps in

service and affordability. For example, the cost to travel by taxi from Stratford to St. Marys is between \$40 and \$50, which is cost-prohibitive for many.

6.3.2 Stakeholder Engagement

Over the course of stakeholder engagement, consultations were conducted with groups including social workers, educational institutions, and mobility organizations; who have interest or knowledge of specific groups that would likely take transit.

6.3.2.1 PC Connect and Current Mobility Options

Feedback was received from stakeholders regarding how well PC Connect is currently meeting the needs of St. Marys residents and those accessing services in St. Marys. Comments were also received regarding how well the taxi company and St. Marys Mobility are meeting the in-town travel demand. Generally, it was shared that PC Connect has provided extremely valuable connections to surrounding towns and population centres, and that it is important to preserve PC Connect routes to both Stratford and London.

Below are feedback points heard during engagement regarding existing transportation options in St. Marys:

- The taxi service is important and should be maintained;
- Taxis are very expensive for some populations;
- Some passengers are left stranded due to limited departures and a lack of evening service;
- PC Connect vehicles are larger than needed; and
- The level of service expected from St. Marys Mobility is high among its passenger base.

6.3.2.2 Demographic, Destination, and Equity Considerations

Throughout the engagement process it was heard that careful consideration must be provided to ensure that any recommended transit solution adequately meets the needs of those who may utilize the service most. It was learned through engagement there were challenges completing first/last mile trips in some parts of St. Marys. Other topics discussed with stakeholders included:

- A need for quality of life considering the lack of existing transit options;
- Equity is a crucial consideration, and transit serves diverse demographics;
- Employers have a harder time finding employees without transit;
- The service should connect to essential social services inside and outside of St. Marys;
- Ensure that seniors' and low-income housing complexes have good access to transit service;
- Consider that most quadrants of St. Marys have at least some low to moderate income residents who may rely on transit; and
- Consider maintaining free or concession fares for certain demographics, including those on low-income.

6.3.2.3 Service Design Feedback

Key feedback considering service design included:

- Support for improving local transportation in-town;
- Opportunities for a closer relationship between St. Marys Mobility and the Town of St. Marys;
- Affordability concerns;
- Further collaboration opportunities with municipalities, ministries, transportation providers, and other organizations;
- Explore different operational arrangements through PC Connect;
- Consider expanded evening and weekend service, and/or a more frequent service;
- Consider improved first/last mile access to regional routes;
- Maintain good connections to Downtown St. Marys where there are many destinations;
- Provide access to the Pyramid Recreation Centre and Friendship Centre, particularly for vulnerable populations and seniors; and
- Maintaining existing routes to London and Stratford is important. Stratford was identified as an important destination for social and housing services.

6.3.2.4 Miscellaneous Feedback

- Identify opportunities to evolve the funding arrangements of PC Connect;
- Walking distances in St. Marys are impacted by the hilly terrain of the town, which can make longer walks more challenging for groups with mobility challenges; and
- A desire for improved regional transportation, including GO Transit and VIA Rail.

7.0 Conceptual Service Models

Based on the information gleaned from the peer review and the existing conditions of both North Perth and St. Marys, three models of public transit delivery were brought forward for further assessment. Service within the two municipalities will look different, however, it is important to recognize how both systems, irrespective of service delivery model, will play an integral role within the wider regional transit network. The three models have been differentiated between the two municipalities as the operating characteristics will differ.

7.1 North Perth

Transit service in North Perth must balance the needs of serving local travel in Listowel, with establishing baseline rural coverage, and connecting all passengers to the regional transit system. It is recommended for all service models that the existing PC Connect Route 1 be maintained between Kitchener and Listowel as ridership continues to grow and travel to Kitchener is a significant demand for daily travel outside of the municipality. All recommended service models would be required to meet AODA standards, including if partnerships with VON Transportation are explored further.

7.1.1 Fixed-Route Service

Fixed-route transit service is the traditional form of bus service, with a scheduled vehicle that travels along a fixed route making marked stops en route. Since the larger population centres of North Perth are largely concentrated along linear corridors, operation could be similar to the former Rural Route, with a higher focus on the needs of travel for North Perth residents. Corridors like Highway 23 would be suitable for a fixed-route service, as it connects several population centres in a direct fashion. A conceptual fixed-route service along Highway 23 could potentially connect Listowel:

- As far north as Palmerston, through Gowanstown; and
- As far south as Stratford, through Mitchell, Monkton, and Atwood.

Opportunities exist for partnerships with other municipalities through cost-sharing agreements. A route along this corridor could potentially also include strategic stops within Listowel, which could provide some local transit connectivity within the community in addition to municipality-wide travel.

7.1.2 On-Demand Service

On-demand service may be an efficient way to service discretionary travel, especially for those who have limited mobility to reach a bus stop and who may need additional assistance to board the vehicle. On-demand service could also help establish the baseline coverage in the rural areas of the municipality, where scheduled transit service would not be a viable option. On-demand, as it is responsive of real-time passenger demand, does not guarantee that a passenger would be able to use it for travel at regular times. In other words, if a passenger must reach their place of employment at the same time

every morning, the bus may be occupied with other trips, so the passenger would not necessarily be guaranteed a regular trip. On-demand service could also be implemented within Listowel to help make in-town trips, or connections to fixed-route service. Options also exist to partner with other organizations, like a local taxi company, to provide trips during periods of low demand, or to provide a separate overlapping on-demand service for conventional passengers.

7.1.3 Hybrid Option (Fixed-Route and On-Demand Service)

By using a combination of a fixed-route service and an on-demand service in some or all of the remainder of the municipality, there exists opportunities to create an integrated transit network within the municipality by accommodating both local and regional trips. This could help increase ridership and coverage across both models. Depending on the level of service provided, it is possible for this option to be more resource intensive, with more vehicles required to be allocated to the two services. Additionally, the scope of the fixed route network would impact the level of on-demand resources required, depending on whether population centres outside of Listowel receive regular transit service.

7.2 St. Marys

It was determined through engagement and analysis that St. Marys needs more options for internal travel while also preserving the existing regional bus connections to London, Stratford, and Waterloo Region. As part of this analysis, it was also determined that opportunities exist for some modifications to the PC Connect service to better connect St. Marys to regional destinations. All recommended service models would be required to meet AODA standards, including if partnerships with St. Marys Mobility are explored further.

7.2.1 Fixed-Route Service

The existing PC Connect service could be modified to serve additional destinations within St. Marys, and may be deviated to bring more areas of St. Marys within walking distance to the route. It was noted through analysis and engagement that the PC Connect service is important to St. Marys residents, with service to all three major destinations (Stratford, London, and Waterloo Region) important for users of the system. An updated version of PC Connect through St. Marys could include a combination of:

- Provision of only one of the current PC Connect routes through St. Marys;
- Addition of stops in St. Marys and locally-oriented route deviations (e.g., to major destinations like the Pyramid Recreation Centre); and/or
- Adjustments to the hours of the PC Connect service to better align with expected periods of high demand.

7.2.2 On-Demand Service

Providing on-demand service within St. Marys could improve accessibility to local destinations, which includes maintaining door-to-door service for passengers with disabilities. The on-demand service could help meet the needs of the dispersed destinations within St. Marys, as there are several key destinations

located away from the main corridors that could have transit service. On-demand service could be provided in multiple ways, including:

- An extension of the existing St. Marys Mobility service;
- A subsidy of the taxi service at specific times or to specific destinations; or
- A separate overlapping on-demand service.

7.2.3 Hybrid Option (Fixed-Route and On-Demand Service)

The hybrid option would see a combination of fixed-route and on-demand service in-town, which could help local passengers connect to the regional services, bringing them further afield to the major population centres along the PC Connect network. The hybrid option could also see internal on-demand service provided during periods of low-demand for regional services, and could also maintain the local specialized transportation coverage as it currently exists. A configuration of this option could include a more direct fixed-route through St. Marys, similar to the existing PC Connect alignment and stops, with on-demand service in the remainder of the town.

7.3 Service Model Recommendations

The conceptual service models were evaluated against five criteria and are summarized in **Table 10** and **Table 11**:

- **Ease of Implementation** accounts for the barriers to implementation, including whether the service model is already in use, and whether it would require significant capital expenditures or initial investments.
- **Suitability to Local Trips** determines whether the service model would efficiently accommodate the expected shorter-distance, local trip demands within the respective municipality.
- **Suitability to Regional Trips** determines whether the service model would efficiently accommodate the expected regional trip demand to other municipalities.
- **Cost Efficiency** accounts for the overall levels of service provided relative to operational expenditures. Specifically, this measure considers the potential capacity and ridership performance of the service model relative to the number of required service hours for the service.
- **Goal Alignment** refers to the overall ability to meet the needs identified in this report, including maintaining essential regional travel connections with respect for local considerations. It also includes input based on what was heard from stakeholders and residents during engagement, which tended to favour fixed-route options over on-demand service.

Table 10: North Perth Service Model Evaluation

Service Model	Ease of Implementation	Suitability to Local Trips	Suitability to Regional Trips	Cost Efficiency	Goal Alignment
Fixed-route	High	Medium	High	High	High
On-demand	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Low
Hybrid	Medium	High	High	Low	Medium

Table 11: St. Marys Service Model Evaluation

Service Model	Ease of Implementation	Suitability to Local Trips	Suitability to Regional Trips	Cost Efficiency	Goal Alignment
Fixed-route	High	Medium	High	Medium	High
On-demand	Low	High	Low	Medium	Medium
Hybrid	Medium	High	High	Low	Medium

Based on the above evaluation, it was determined that the most appropriate and cost-efficient service model for both North Perth and St. Marys would be adjusting the existing PC Connect service to expand the fixed-route service. This aligns with what was heard during the engagement process, where most respondents identified that they preferred fixed-route transit service over other models, in part due to the regular schedule and travel times provided by fixed-route service. Because of the compact town centres in both North Perth and St. Marys, most of the urban areas of each municipality can be effectively served by fixed-route service through strategic bus stop placement, while maintaining fairly direct routings.

8.0

Service Plan: North Perth

Meeting the most essential transportation needs of North Perth was prioritized in the development of the service plan recommendations. Throughout the study, it was heard that providing basic, convenient, and essential transportation links to both rural and urban areas of the municipality would have positive impacts on individual lifestyles, cost of living, access to essential services, and overall quality of life.

There are two key transit service recommendations for North Perth:

- **Adjust PC Connect Route 1 to operate a new schedule and routing in Listowel**, providing more travel and connection options to passengers between North Perth, communities along Highway 86, and Waterloo Region.
- **Support the implementation of a new PC Connect Route 4**, between Stratford and Listowel via Mitchell and Highway 23, stopping in Monkton and Atwood and other population centres en route.

Together, this strategic expansion of the PC Connect network will provide efficient service along the corridors with the highest demand, opening new travel options for North Perth residents. Both routes have been oriented within Listowel to provide options for some in-trip travel, and better connections to the rural communities of North Perth. **Figure 17** shows the alignment for the adjusted Route 1 and proposed Route 4, while **Figure 18** shows the alignments on both routes within Listowel.

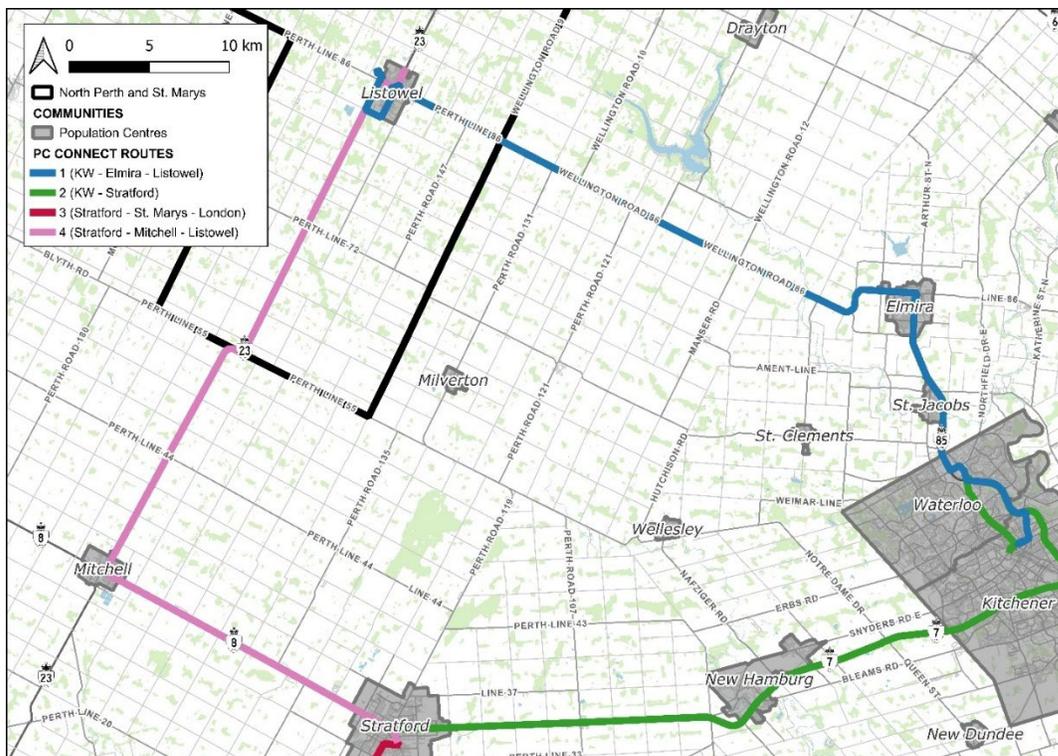


Figure 17: Proposed North Perth PC Connect Service

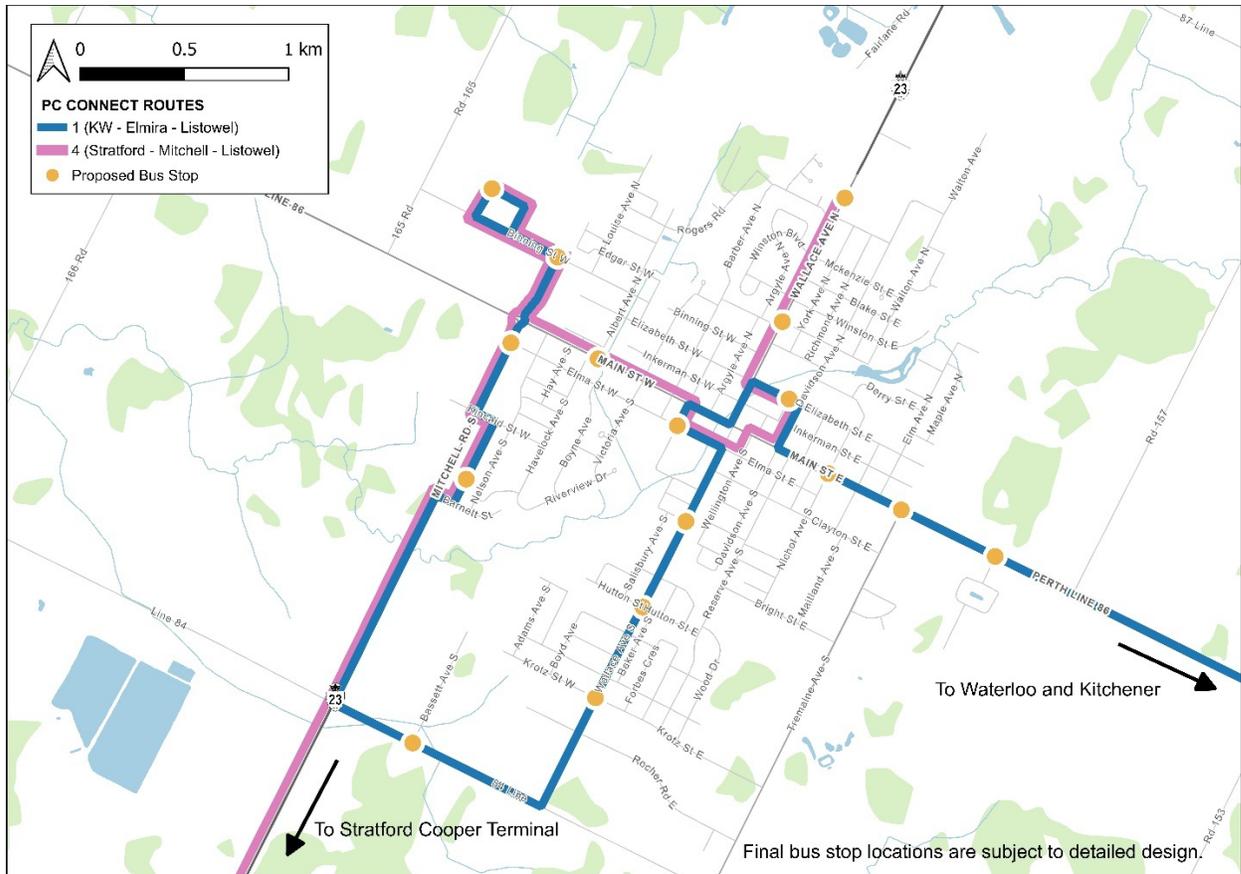


Figure 18: North Perth Proposed Transit Service within Listowel

8.1 Schedule Options

Both PC Connect Route 1 and Route 4 are intended to provide regional and local service for North Perth, and the schedule options are designed to make efficient use of service hours and vehicles. With both routes operating using one vehicle each, scheduling will be important to ensure the needs of riders are met. Some key highlights of the proposed schedule options include:

- Early morning trips to Listowel for reverse commuters to key employers in the municipality;
- Peak-hour commuter trips to and from Stratford and Kitchener to connect to GO Transit in Kitchener and Stratford Transit;
- Convenient scheduling for intermediate stops along both routes for passengers travelling into Listowel;
- Combined frequencies of the two routes in Listowel allowing for more local travel options; and
- Later trips to allow evening commuters a regular access option to travel home.

8.1.1

Route 1

Route 1 currently operates 3 round trips between Listowel and Kitchener on weekdays, and 4 round trips between Listowel and Waterloo on Saturdays. No service is currently provided on Sundays. Three potential schedules for the service were explored (**Table 12**), allowing for various service hour cost scenarios. The schedules were developed through consultation with Stratford Transit, and recognize the constraints presented by the overall allowable budget for the service and suitable shifts for operators.

Table 12: Schedule Options for Route 1

Item	Current Weekday	Current Saturday	Schedule 1A	Schedule 1B	Schedule 1C
Daily service hours	9	8.25	8	11	16
Direct connection to Kitchener Central Station	Yes	No (requires transfer to GRT)	No (requires transfer to GRT)	Yes	At peak trips
Round trips to/from Waterloo Region	3	4	3	4	6
Required drivers	1	1	1	2 (part-time)	2
Required vehicles	1	1	1	1	1

The schedules were developed to capture the needs of the highest possible number of passengers, including those commuting to work, individuals accessing services, and the ability to make round trips of various lengths.

- Schedule 1A:** Three (3) round trips to and from Conestoga Station in Waterloo, with two operating in the morning and one operating in the afternoon. Service would be similar to the current weekday schedule. Because of the longer travel time in Listowel, the route would need to stop in Waterloo instead of Kitchener, similar to how it operates on the current Saturday schedule. This option is poor at accommodating work trips, and is likely to continue to be used similar to how it is today.
- Schedule 1B:** Four (4) round trips to and from Central Station in Kitchener, with two operating in the morning and two operating in the afternoon and evening. This schedule would be able to better accommodate work trips, but would have less desirable shift times, which may be a challenge for attracting drivers.
- Schedule 1C:** Four (4) round trips to and from Conestoga Station in Waterloo, and two (2) round trips to and from Central Station in Kitchener. The two trips connecting to Central Station would be timed to align with eastbound GO Train service in the morning and westbound GO Train service in the evening. This option would most efficiently make use of two drivers, providing service between Kitchener and Listowel every 3 hours in each direction to accommodate a wide range of trip types.

Under the current schedule, Saturday service has higher productivity than weekday service, which is likely due to afternoon return commuter trips not being sufficiently accommodated on the existing

service. Moving to a weekday schedule (Schedule 1B or 1C) which accommodates afternoon peak trips for employees in either Listowel or Waterloo Region would likely improve ridership performance.

Because of the longer runtimes in Listowel under the new Route 1 routing, maintaining 4 trips between Listowel and Conestoga Station as it currently operates on Saturday would not be viable without additional hours. A base level of service that can accommodate discretionary trips is likely the best option for Saturdays in the near term, with potential to further expand as demand warrants.

8.1.2 Route 4

Route 4 follows a similar route to parts of the former Rural Route, which operated 8 round trips starting and ending in Stratford through Mitchell, Listowel, and Milverton. The Rural Route is the best comparator for any new schedule, and is presented alongside the other schedule options in **Table 13**. It should be noted that compared to the Rural Route, Route 4 more directly offers two-way service between locations in North Perth and West Perth through the direct routing along the two major roads.

Table 13: Schedule Options for Route 4

Item	Former Rural Route Weekday	Former Rural Route Saturday	Schedule 4A	Schedule 4B	Schedule 4C
Daily service hours	18	6	8	11	15
Connection to Stratford Cooper Terminal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Round trips to/from Stratford	8	3	3	4	6
Required drivers	2	1	1	2 (part-time)	2
Required vehicles	2	1	1	1	1

The schedule options for Route 4 were developed to provide strong connections with the Stratford Transit network and convenient trips for passengers from both North Perth and intermediate stops. These three schedule options provide varying levels of service for the corridor, with Schedule 4C providing the greatest quality of service and travel options for passengers.

- **Schedule 4A:** Three (3) round trips to and from Stratford, with two operating in the morning and one operating in the afternoon. Service would be expected to be similar in schedule and use to the current Route 1 schedule between Listowel and Kitchener. This option may be poor at accommodating work trips to Listowel, and would likely be used for discretionary trips in both directions.
- **Schedule 4B:** Four (4) round trips to and from Stratford, with two operating in the morning and two operating in the afternoon and evening. This schedule would be able to better accommodate work trips, but would have less desirable shift times, which may be a challenge for attracting drivers.

- **Schedule 4C:** Six (6) round trips to and from Stratford. Similar to Schedule 1C, this option would most efficiently make use of two drivers, providing service between Kitchener and Stratford every 2.5 to 3 hours in each direction to accommodate a wide range of trip types.

All options run less frequently than the Rural Route on weekdays but should provide a variety of service levels that are sufficient for weekday travel as service is reintroduced along this corridor.

8.1.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations are with respect to the transit service plan in North Perth:

- Adjust the routing of PC Connect Route 1 within Listowel.
 - Implement proposed Schedule 1B on Weekdays for Route 1.
 - Implement proposed Schedule 1A on Saturdays for Route 1.
- Implement the new PC Connect Route 4.
 - Implement proposed Schedule 4C on Weekdays for Route 4.
 - Implement proposed Schedule 4A on Saturday for Route 4.
- Slowly implement Sunday service as outlined in **Section 10.2**.

8.2 Expected Travel Demand

Using ridership from the current Route 1 service (**Table 14**) and from the former PC Connect Rural Route to model Route 4 (**Table 15**), ridership has been projected for the future adjusted services based on the recommended schedules. Rural Route ridership only considered the portions of the route that run along the current alignment. Generally, ridership is expected to grow due to the better options for work travel during weekdays, and the more regular frequency along the Route 4 corridor compared to the previous Rural Route. Key assumptions in these ridership forecasts include:

- Ridership in Year 1 is the expected “mature” ridership of the service given the characteristics of the service in Year 1 compared to the existing or former routes. Ridership may take longer to reach this level of ridership depending on how quickly residents adapt to the new service changes.
- Ridership in Year 5 on both routes grows based both on expected population growth, the addition of Sunday service, and adjustments to travel behaviour as residents begin to see the service as a permanent part of the community.

Table 14: PC Connect Route 1 Projected Annual Ridership

Trip Segment	Existing	Year 1	Year 5
Between Listowel and other communities	4,000	4,450	5,700
Between communities outside of Listowel	1,500	1,700	2,100
Internal trips within Listowel	-	550	700
Sum of Annual Projected Trips	5,500	6,700	8,500

Table 15: PC Connect Route 4 Projected Annual Ridership

Trip Segment	Former	Year 1	Year 5
Between Listowel and other communities in North Perth	250	300	350
Between Listowel and Mitchell	300	350	450
Between Listowel and Stratford	850	1,050	1,350
Between other communities in North Perth and Mitchell	50	100	100
Between other communities in North Perth and Stratford	200	300	400
Between Mitchell and Stratford	2,100	2,600	3,250
Internal trips within Listowel	-	800	950
Sum of Annual Projected Trips	3,750	5,500	6,850

8.3 Specialized Service

The introduction of local fixed-route transit within Listowel will require the municipality to ensure that there are reasonable options for persons with disabilities to travel that are unable to use a fixed-route because of their disability. This typically involves the establishment of a door-to-door specialized transit services. Providing suitable travel options for persons with disabilities is a requirement of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities (AODA) Act, and would need to be offered at the same cost and hours to the passenger as conventional service. The Municipality of North Perth should explore specialized service for trips within Listowel, providing connections to the PC Connect service for longer trips outside of the community.

One option to provide specialized service is to contract this to the Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) Perth-Huron, a not-for-profit organization that currently provides door-to-door accessible service for persons with disabilities within North Perth. Since VON has limited resources and may have restrictions on who it provides service to (currently prioritizing medical rides), this would require further discussion and negotiation to ensure the organization has capacity and the service meets the requirements of the AODA.

It is recommended for the municipality of North Perth to continue to engage VON Transportation Perth-Huron to determine how feasible it is for them to provide specialized transit service for trips within Listowel. If this option is not suitable, other options should be explored to provide this service.

9.0

Service Plan: St. Marys

The transit service plan for St. Marys has been developed with the key goals of improving local service coverage while enhancing connections to Stratford and maintaining connections to London. Proposed changes include:

- Shortening Route 2 to only run between Stratford and Kitchener; and
- Adjusting Route 3 to travel through more of St. Marys, making new local stops along the route.

The recommended route and proposed bus stops in St. Marys are illustrated in **Figure 19**. Bus service in St. Marys will connect to key destinations and employment areas in town identified through the engagement process, not only benefitting residents, but also individuals travelling to the town for work, school, shopping, tourism, and essential services. By maintaining usage of the PC Connect bus system, St. Marys will benefit from the cost sharing of resources and established operations, and passengers will benefit from an integrated regional transit network connecting them to large urban centres in the region.

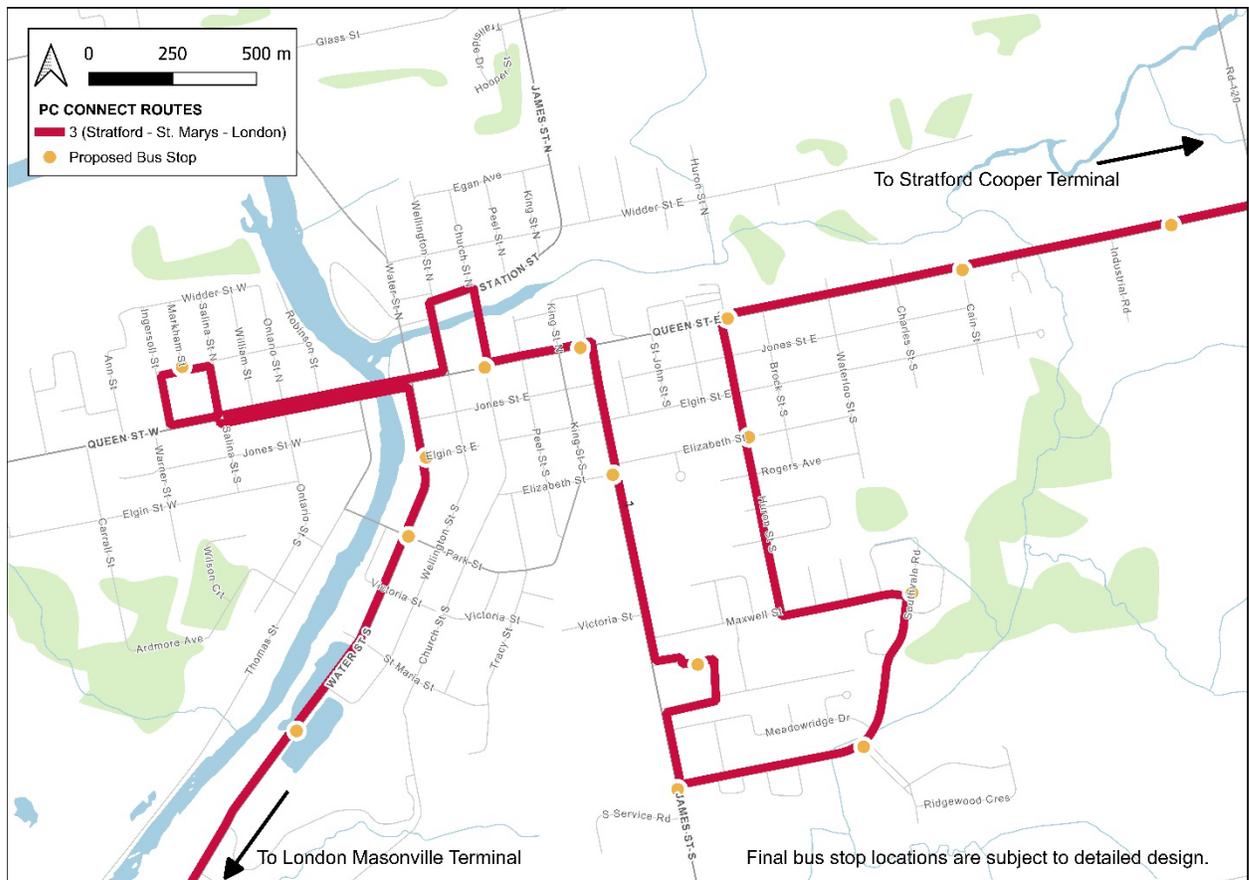


Figure 19: St. Marys Proposed Transit Service

9.1

Conceptual Schedule

The schedule has been developed to maximize the utility of the service, recognizing that there are some limitations on the number of service hours available to operate the service. Conceptual timetables have been prepared to understand what kind of trips would be possible under this service plan.

The schedule has been written to, at a minimum, provide the following basic trips:

- An early-morning trip to London from St. Marys, and Stratford from St. Marys;
- An evening trip from London and from Stratford to St. Marys;
- Midday short-turn services provided between St. Marys and Stratford to enable access to social services, groceries, appointments, and more;
- Recognition of the Via Rail schedule, so that there is minimal duplication of trips along the route; and
- Arrivals at Stratford Cooper Terminal in recognition of the half-hourly pulse that Stratford Transit operates.

Table 16 summarizes the proposed schedule options for the adjusted PC Connect service to St. Marys.

Table 16: Schedule Options for Route 3

Item	Current Weekday	Current Saturday	Schedule 3A	Schedule 3B	Schedule 3C
Daily service hours ⁵	12	11	8	10	15
Direct connection to Kitchener Central Station	Yes (on Route 2)	No (requires transfer to GRT on Route 2)	No (requires transfer to Route 2)	No (requires transfer to Route 2)	No (requires transfer to Route 2)
Round trips to/from Waterloo Region	3	3	0	0	0
Round trips to/from London	3	3	2	2	3
Round trips to/from Stratford	6	6	3	4	6
Required drivers	2	2	1	2 (part-time)	2
Required vehicles	2	2	1	1	1

Three schedule options were developed which prioritize service to Stratford and internal service within St. Marys. These schedules were developed in recognition of the VIA Rail schedule to reduce the overlapping or duplication of services.

⁵ Service hours on current service do not include the Stratford to Kitchener portions of Route 2.

- **Schedule 3A:** Two (2) round trips between London and Stratford in the morning and late afternoon, and one (1) round trip in the early afternoon between St. Marys and Stratford. This option would be able to accommodate discretionary trips and some work trips if used in combination with evening westbound VIA Rail service and would be able to accommodate minimal longer-term local travel in St. Marys.
- **Schedule 3B:** Two (2) round trips between London and Stratford in the morning and late afternoon, and two (2) round trips between St. Marys and Stratford in the late morning and early afternoon. This schedule would be able to better accommodate work trips, but would have less desirable shift times, which may be a challenge for attracting drivers.
- **Schedule 3C:** Three (3) round trips between London and Stratford, and three (3) round trips between St. Marys and Stratford in between the London trips. This option has the same number of trips as the current combined Route 2 and 3 service and would most efficiently make use of two drivers with one vehicle, providing service between St. Marys and Stratford every 2 to 3 hours in each direction to accommodate a wide range of trip types; and half-day or full-day trips to and from London. Local travel would also be accommodated every 2 to 3 hours and would be able to accommodate most work trips along the corridor in St. Marys.

Furthermore, by strategically timing trips along the service, passengers will be able to reach London early in the morning for work and school, accounting for connections to buses in London to reach their final destinations. Short-turn trips, meaning bus trips that do not travel the full length of the route, will be provided between Stratford and St. Marys to account for the restructuring of Route 2, and will allow for trips to come more often between the two communities. Furthermore, by providing these additional trips, service within St. Marys will become more frequent.

By providing a range of connections to Stratford, passengers are also able to transfer to PC Connect Route 2 and connect to Grand River Transit in Waterloo Region, allowing for onward travel to the GO Transit network.

9.1.1

Recommendations

The following changes are recommended for St. Marys:

- Adjust PC Connect Route 3 within St. Marys.
 - Implement proposed Schedule 3C for weekday service.
 - Implement proposed Schedule 3A for Saturday service.
- Slowly implement Sunday service as outlined in **Section 10.2**.

9.2

Expected Travel Demand

Using ridership from the Stratford to St. Marys parts of Route 2 and the existing Route 3 service, ridership has been projected for the future adjusted services based on the recommended schedules. Similarly to Routes 1 and 4, ridership in Year 5 grows based on population growth in Stratford, the

addition of Sunday service, and adjustments to travel behaviour as residents begin to see the service as a permanent part of the community.

Table 17: Projected PC Connect Route 3 Ridership

Trip Segment	Existing Routes 2 and 3	Year 1	Year 5
Between St. Marys and Stratford	3,300	3,150	3,900
Between Stratford and London	2,100	2,200	2,750
Between St. Marys and London	1,500	1,550	1,950
Trips within St. Marys	-	800	950
Sum of Annual Projected Trips	6,950	7,700	9,550

9.3 Specialized Service

Providing parallel specialized transit service is an important consideration for permanent transit services. As an interim condition, specialized transportation may be accommodated through other means, but for long-term adherence to relevant accessibility legislation, there must be policies in place to accommodate specialized trips. Currently, St. Marys Mobility provides a significant number of these trips within the town, and there is already demand for the service. As part of the changes to Route 3, the Town should explore specialized service for trips within St. Marys, providing connections to PC Connect for trips to Stratford and London.

One option for St. Marys to meet its AODA requirements for accessible transportation is to contract out a specialized transit service to St. Marys Mobility. Should St. Marys Mobility agree to provide the specialized transit service for St. Marys, it would require formal agreements and terms with the Town regarding service standards and funding. St. Marys Mobility receives a significant portion of its funding from Provincial Gas Tax, and different services must work together to create mutually beneficial arrangements to conventional and specialized trips within the Town.

It is therefore recommended that ongoing discussions occur with St. Marys Mobility to determine operational capabilities for specialized transit service. Should this solution prove infeasible, a different solution for local specialized transit trips would need to be determined.

10.0 Service Plan: Network

This section outlines other recommendations and requirements that apply across the network. The complete proposed network, including the recommendations for North Perth and for St. Marys, is presented in **Figure 20**.

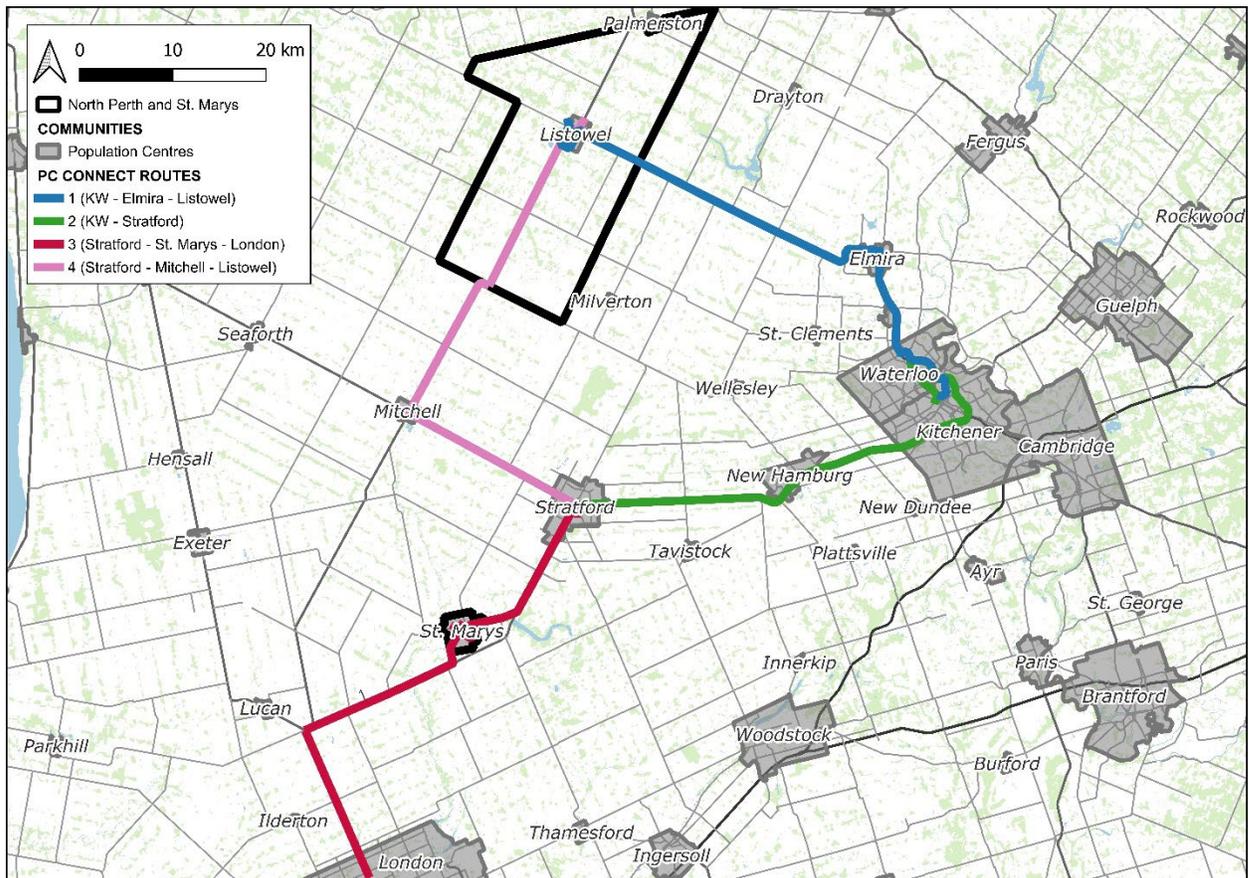


Figure 20: Proposed PC Connect System Map

10.1 Stops and Infrastructure Requirements

In providing expanded PC Connect services, there are three key requirements of infrastructure that must be met by the service:

- The service must be accessible and safe for passengers, and meet all applicable laws and regulations;
- Routes and stops should be intuitive, easy to find, and conveniently located;
- Infrastructure standards should apply to the entire PC Connect network, allowing for seamless journeys.

Year-round accessible stops and vehicles are important in ensuring a reliable and safe service for all passengers, regardless of individual ability. Existing PC Connect services meet these requirements, and it is important to ensure these practices are extended to an expanded service network.

Because the service is contracted to a private service operator, most operational infrastructure, including depots and operator facilities, are their responsibility and are not included in any capital expenses under this plan.

10.2 Sunday and Holiday Service

To best accommodate travel demand on Sundays and holidays, it is proposed to run a limited service across the entire PC Connect network. It is recommended to explore adding this service toward the end of the five-year plan, if ridership improves on the weekday and Saturday services.

To accommodate essential travel on Sundays and holidays, it is recommended to operate a limited service that maintains basic connections across the PC Connect network. This service would provide basic schedules that maintain connections between London, St. Marys, Stratford, West Perth, North Perth, and Waterloo Region. This service would operate out of Stratford, with two round trips to Kitchener via Listowel, and one round trip to London via St. Marys, and would be coordinated to allow for two round trips between London and Stratford through St. Marys when used in combination with the VIA Rail service. This service would be accordingly split amongst the funding partners and would be anticipated to add the service hours outlined in **Table 18** on Sundays and holidays.

Table 18: Estimated Daily Service Hours for Sunday and Holiday Service Concept

Route Segment	Service Hours
Route 1	4.5
Route 3	3
Route 4	5

This Sunday and holiday schedule would allow for round-trip travel along the entire PC Connect network. By providing all passengers the option for same-day returns, it ensures that basic connections are provided year-round.

11.0 Operations and Governance Model

11.1 Operations

It has been identified through engagement that it is currently operationally challenging for Stratford Transit, as a department of the City of Stratford, to take on the full workload associated with the PC Connect network. The current arrangement includes Stratford Transit being responsible for the monitoring, planning, administration, supervision, and management of PC Connect. The present organizational structure of PC Connect and Stratford Transit was created as an interim condition to allow the continuation of services after previous changes to the funding and governance structure. Stratford Transit also has considerable experience and knowledge in transit operations, allowing the department to effectively manage the system.

Any expansion or continuation of PC Connect service will require the addition of an administrator and supervisor of PC Connect service to support Stratford Transit on the day-to-day tasks associated with the system. This would be addressed by cost sharing this staff member at Stratford Transit across the PC Connect system funding partners.

The study also explored whether contracting the operations of the service to Stratford Transit would be feasible. This is not recommended at this time, as Stratford Transit does not have the vehicle or operator staffing resources required for the service. This does not preclude enhanced partnerships for conventional or parallel transit service with Stratford Transit in the future.

11.1.1 Recommended PC Connect Operational Initiatives

There are several other key system-wide recommendations to enhance the overall passenger experience and the greater transit network that should be considered while continuing to operate the service.

- Improve on-board technology of the PC Connect fleet, including the introduction of CAD/AVL and open source GTFS-RT data to allow live vehicle tracking and integrating data with more third-party transit apps.
- Explore improving fare collection technology to support more payment methods and improve integration with other transit agencies.
- Explore of fare integration agreements with Grand River Transit, London Transit Commission, and Stratford Transit, to allow PC Connect passengers' free transfers to local transit systems.

11.2 Governance

An effective governance model for these services was also explored. Governance refers to how service decisions are made, the service is managed and overseen, and how different partners of the service work together. Three options were explored:

1. **Working Independently:** Funding municipalities would operate routes entirely independently of each other, with informal collaboration.
2. **Shared Service Agreement:** Funding municipalities would form a contract that includes the funding arrangement and municipal obligations, levels of transit service to be provided within each municipality, dialogue channels for regular communication among partners, and clear responsibilities for the shared management, oversight, planning, and operations of the system.
3. **Commission Structure:** Funding municipalities would have more direct governing power over the day-to-day operations of the service through a commission, typically formed by elected officials appointed to the body by each funding municipality, who would then be collectively responsible for the transit service.

Because many of these routes cross municipal boundaries, operating the system requires collaboration between municipalities, including a formalized decision-making and funding model. Formalized governance also allows for clear accountability and responsibilities for the service. Similarly, due to the lower relative size and scope of the PC Connect system, as well as the positive current operation of the service through Stratford Transit, a commission is not recommended at this time.

It was determined through service planning that continuation of the PC Connect model and system would provide the simplest service arrangement for both municipalities, more cost-sharing opportunities amongst partner municipalities, and the fewest barriers to implementing. Working collaboratively across jurisdictions also allows for greater provincial funding opportunities.

In the near-term, opportunities exist to further enhance the governance of PC Connect by instituting a more formal committee that meets on a regular basis to discuss what each municipality is hearing from residents about the service. The first step would be to establish a Memorandum of Understanding to agree on the service plan, cost and distribution of costs. Other elements that may be included are technology costs, operations and staffing and term of the partnership.

Stratford Transit could lead this committee as the body in charge of service implementation and monitoring, and one representative from each funding municipality would participate. These regular committee meetings would allow for a regular communication channel for further improvements to the system and service adjustments in a more coordinated sense. This committee would allow for improved collaboration amongst funding municipalities, including more coordinated service planning and adjustments.

11.2.1

Recommended System Governance

Based on the need for a more robust and formalized governance arrangement for the PC Connect system, the following recommendations have been developed.

- Continue operation of the PC Connect system, including using PC Connect to implement the service plan recommendations contained within this report.
- Support Stratford Transit as the managing entity of PC Connect, with a Memorandum of Understanding and cost-sharing agreement to fund the service as well as adding a staff member to manage and administer the service.
- Formalize a shared service agreement amongst the funding municipalities of PC Connect, including considerations for the funding model and for the management of the service by Stratford Transit.
- Formalize a working PC Connect committee, governed by terms of the shared service agreements, and represented by each funding partner of the system.

12.0

Financial Plan

This section outlines the financial components of operating the PC Connect system, including the anticipated operating and capital expenses required as part of the plan, the cost sharing opportunities between serviced municipalities, funding opportunities, and fares.

12.1

Fare Structure

Table 19 lists the current fares on the PC Connect routes. Fares are organized into two categories:

- Long-distance route fares, which are \$12 for adults and \$10 for seniors and students; and
- Short-distance fares, which are \$6 for adults and \$5 for seniors and students.
- Veterans, support persons, and children aged 5 and under travel for free on any route.

Table 19: Current Fare Structure on PC Connect

Routes	Adults	Seniors (60 and over) and Students	Veterans, Support Persons, and Children (5 and under)
One-way fare	\$12	\$10	Free
St. Marys to Stratford (Routes 2, 3)	\$6	\$5	Free
Country Sisters to Wallenstein (Route 1)	\$6	\$5	Free

Similar semi-regional systems use the following structures:

- Middlesex County Connect has a flat \$5 rate for any distance, with the same exemptions for free travel and a discounted 30-day pass for students with eligible ID.
- Guelph Owen Sound Transit has a zonal fare ranging from \$5 to \$20, with no discounted exemptions.
- Ride Norfolk has an out-of-town rate of \$6.50 for adults and \$4.25 for seniors aged 55 and over and youth under 18, and an in-town rate of \$3 for adults and \$2 for seniors and youth. Veterans, CNIB cardholders, and children aged 5 and under travel for free.
- County Transit (in Prince Edward County) has zonal fares ranging from \$3.50 to \$10, which is lowered to \$2.50 to \$7 for students, youth aged 14-18, seniors aged 55 and over, and people with disabilities. Children aged 13 and under travel for free.

Following the peer review, PC Connect fares are in the range of other agencies. Route 4, being of a similar distance and cost to operate, should use the same fare structure as other routes. Local service within urban areas (e.g., St. Marys, Listowel) may benefit from having a lower fare to encourage further ridership within the area. Additional short segments of routes may also be viable to offer a zonal fare, but zonal fares should be kept at the same rates as other types of zonal fares to minimize making the fare system too confusing for passengers.

For passengers that need to connect using multiple PC Connect routes, a free transfer or fare cap should be explored, subject to fare collection technology capabilities.

In collaboration with connecting transit agencies including Grand River Transit (GRT), the London Transit Commission (LTC), and Stratford Transit, PC Connect should explore the feasibility of fare integration with these local transit services. Fare reconciliation could occur through formal agreements with the transit agencies, which could be negotiated to allow for fare integration with local transit agencies, either through full transfer privileges or discounted rates. Subject to the outcome of negotiations, fare integration may represent a minor additional expenditure, however, because the recommended service plan connects to major transfer points, the passenger benefit would be significant.

Table 20: Proposed Fare Structure on PC Connect

Routes	Adults	Seniors (60 and over) and Students	Veterans, Support Persons, and Children (5 and under)
One-way fare	\$12.00	\$10.00	Free
Short-distance fare*	\$6.00	\$5.00	Free
Trips within St. Marys	\$3.00	\$2.50	Free
Trips within Listowel	\$3.00	\$2.50	Free

Short-distance fares would apply to shorter route sections across the network, with any trips that are longer than one route section would cost the one-way fare rate, switching the system more formally to a lightly zonal structure while maintaining a maximum on any one-way fare to encourage ridership.

12.1.1

Recommendations

- Include a fare for Route 4 at the same rate as the existing routes.
- Support a local fare at \$3 for adults and \$2.50 for seniors and students for trips within St. Marys and within Listowel, to improve local attraction to the service.
- Support a short-distance fare (\$6 for adults, \$5 for seniors and students) for trips within the following route sections:
 - St. Marys to/from Stratford (Route 3);
 - Stratford to/from Mitchell (Route 4);
 - Mitchell to/from Monkton (Route 4);
 - Monkton to/from Listowel (Route 4);
 - Listowel to/from Country Sisters (Route 1); and
 - Country Sisters to/from Wallenstein (Route 1).
- Expand eligibility for the discounted fare tier to all youth aged 6 to 18.
- Initiate discussions and explore collaboration amongst connecting local transit agencies to develop integrated transfer agreements to local services.
- Explore improved fare collection technology that could support simpler fare payment options for passengers and integrated fares with connecting transit agencies.

12.2 Cost Sharing Opportunities

Opportunities exist for the cost sharing of both operational expenditures and capital investments. Assets shared amongst the municipalities including vehicles and software, in addition to the overall ridership benefits of having an integrated network allow for improved overall financial performance. Through the existing contract with Voyago Transit to operate the PC Connect service, each municipality benefits from an overall reduction in fixed costs associated with the cost per service hour, including the administrative, insurance, labour, and maintenance costs included in the service hour rate charged by the contractor.

The PC Connect system benefits from the shared administrative costs to manage, plan, and make periodic service adjustments outside of contractor responsibilities. These costs must be borne outside of the contract to ensure compliance and monitoring of the service performance. These resources are used across the entire PC Connect system, allowing the costs to be shared amongst all partner municipalities.

12.3 External Funding Opportunities

There are several external funding opportunities that transit expansion within North Perth and St. Marys would potentially be eligible for. There are several provincial and federal initiatives that may contribute towards the PC Connect service within the two subject municipalities.

12.3.1 Ontario Transit Investment Fund (OTIF)

The Ontario Transit Investment Fund is a new program through the Ontario government that supports the expansion of transit service into underserved communities, particularly in rural areas. The most crucial element to receiving funding is demonstrating that the service is expanded or new, directly aligning with the fund's purpose of addressing service gaps and supporting the growth of the transit network. Components of this study that improve the likelihood of eligibility include:

- The plan involves service hour enhancements and changes to the overall PC Connect governance structure, qualifying as an expanded service.
- The plan includes the expansion of internal local services and a redesigned Route 4.
- The plan aligns with the overall goals of the funding program and broader Ministry of Transportation initiatives to further transit service integration between municipalities. This would be further improved with fare coordination between connecting urban transit systems.
- The project addresses first/last mile connection concerns with the existing PC Connect network, servicing residential, employment and shopping destinations.
- Formalizing the governance and operations structure of PC Connect promotes integration and long-term service stability.
- There are significant equity considerations for the PC Connect system, notably heard during engagement with how many individuals were impacted by the loss of the Rural Route.
- Planning of the services is being coordinated amongst the funding parties of the system.

OTIF funding is eligible for both operational and capital expenditures over a five-year period, and is intended to gradually ramp down as municipalities increase ridership, migrating to the Provincial Gas Tax program. Funding is maximized at 50% of the cost of the program over the five years, with the municipalities expected to contribute the remaining 50% through municipal funding and fare revenue.

12.3.2 Provincial Gas Tax Program

The Ontario Gas Tax program allocates annual funding to municipalities to support the operational and capital aspects of local public transit. Funding is generally allocated based on population and network size. The current/existing allocations of Provincial Gas Tax funding for 2024-25 include:

- North Perth: \$80,090
- St. Marys: \$163,485 (note: figure and calculation includes some surrounding municipalities as funding goes toward St. Marys and Area Mobility Service)
- West Perth: \$53,140

Using modelling tools provided by the Ontario Ministry of Transportation, it was determined that applying PC Connect ridership to each municipality would maximize the Provincial Gas Tax allocation for each of the three funding partners. This funding model uses ridership, population growth, and municipal investment levels for the transit service to determine the level of Provincial Gas Tax funding available to the service. As the fourth funding partner, Stratford may also be eligible for an increase in Provincial Gas Tax funding but would be expected to apply it to their existing local transit system first before applying it to PC Connect. Additional funding in Year 5 is anticipated to be:

- \$45,500 for North Perth;
- \$97,250 for St. Marys; and
- \$23,000 for West Perth.

12.3.3 Canada Community-Building Fund (CCBF)

The CCBF is a long-term source of federal funding provided to municipalities for various infrastructure projects, including public transportation. This funding could complement money received from the provincial gas tax. Funding is distributed through the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and North Perth and St. Marys are eligible recipients.

Other opportunities for funding may exist through future federal and provincial funding programs or through other local partnerships. Partnerships with other surrounding municipalities may also allow for new cost-sharing opportunities.

12.4 Projected Operating Budget

The following table summarizes the anticipated operational expenses and revenue of the PC Connect routes, as proposed within this service plan. The breakdown for each municipality is subject to the

proposed funding model for the service, which will depend on the negotiated shared service agreement amongst funding partners. Assumptions used in this budget include:

- Year 5 figures have been calculated to 2025 dollars, and do not account for inflation or other anticipated cost changes over the plan.
- Hourly operating costs have increased from \$96 to \$100 per hour in Year 1 and Year 5.
- The Sunday and holiday service proposed in **Section 10.2** does not operate in Year 1 but is part of Year 5.
- Route 2 would be shortened to operate between Stratford and Kitchener, and would be further developed outside of this plan.
- OTIF funding may be secured over the first five years of the plan, starting at 80% of the gross operating expenses in Year 1 and 20% of the gross operating expenses in Year 5. It should be noted that OTIF funding would no longer continue past Year 5, and net expenses would be expected to increase by the same amount across the system.
- Additional Provincial Gas Tax funding does not include any reallocation of existing Provincial Gas Tax funding from specialized transit partners, and only considers the additional increase in revenue for each municipality, up to the current funding cap allocated to each municipality.

Table 21: Projected PC Connect Operating Budget

Item	Year 1	Year 5
Service hours, Route 1	\$317,750	\$345,750
Service hours, Route 3	\$428,500	\$447,250
Service hours, Route 4	\$418,250	\$449,250
Transit coordinator	\$75,000	\$75,000
Gross operating expenses	\$1,239,500	\$1,317,250
Projected revenue, Route 1	(\$46,250)	(\$59,000)
Projected revenue, Route 3	(\$43,000)	(\$53,250)
Projected revenue, Route 4	(\$35,750)	(\$45,000)
Projected OTIF funding	(\$951,500)	(\$263,250)
Projected additional Provincial Gas Tax, North Perth	(\$0)	(\$45,500)
Projected additional Provincial Gas Tax, St. Marys	(\$0)	(\$97,250)
Projected additional Provincial Gas Tax, West Perth	(\$0)	(\$23,000)
Projected net expenses (with OTIF)	\$123,000	\$731,000
Projected net expenses (without OTIF)	\$1,114,500	\$994,250

Table 22 lists the expenses for Routes 1 and 4, which connect to North Perth, and **Table 23** lists the expenses for Route 3, which connects to St. Marys. Funding splits between each municipality for each route will need to be determined through the shared service agreement. It could be assumed that under a future funding model:

- Only municipalities along each route will directly contribute to the service;
- Shared costs, like the transit coordinator, will be equally split between the four funding partners;

- Expected cost-sharing for each route would likely be based on the relative level of service each municipality receives (i.e., based on service hours); and
- The City of Stratford would be expected to contribute toward the cost of operating Routes 2, 3 and 4.

Table 22: Projected PC Connect Operating Budget for North Perth and West Perth

Item	Year 1	Year 5
Service hours, Route 1	\$317,750	\$345,750
Service hours, Route 4	\$418,250	\$449,250
Transit coordinator (1/4 split between each municipality)	\$38,500	\$38,500
Gross operating expenses	\$773,500	\$832,500
Projected revenue, Route 1	(\$46,250)	(\$59,000)
Projected revenue, Route 4	(\$35,750)	(\$45,000)
Projected OTIF funding	(\$618,750)	(\$116,500)
Projected additional Provincial Gas Tax, North Perth	(\$0)	(\$45,500)
Projected additional Provincial Gas Tax, West Perth	(\$0)	(\$23,000)
Projected net expenses (with OTIF)	\$72,750	\$493,500
Projected net expenses (without OTIF)	\$691,500	\$660,000

Table 23: Projected PC Connect Operating Budget for St. Marys and Stratford

Item	Year 1	Year 5
Service hours, Route 3	\$428,500	\$447,250
Transit coordinator (1/4 split between each municipality)	\$18,750	\$18,750
Gross operating expenses	\$447,250	\$466,000
Projected revenue, Route 3	(\$43,000)	(\$53,250)
Projected OTIF funding	(\$357,500)	(\$93,000)
Projected additional Provincial Gas Tax, St. Marys	(\$0)	(\$97,250)
Projected net expenses (with OTIF)	\$46,500	\$222,500
Projected net expenses (without OTIF)	\$404,250	\$315,500

12.5

Capital Budget

The largest share of capital expenses for the service will go towards bus stop infrastructure improvements along modified or new portions of the routes. Vehicles are currently provisioned by the operator for PC Connect and are part of the hourly operating cost. Infrastructure improvements are necessary as part of the implementation of the system for AODA and other regulatory compliance, allowing as many riders as possible to use the service. The cost of bus stops is assumed at \$2,500 per stop, but may vary in practice:

- It is estimated that North Perth would be required to improve up to 18 stop locations, at an approximate cost of \$45,000.

- It is estimated that West Perth would be required to improve up to 4 stop locations, at an approximate cost of \$10,000.
- It is estimated that St. Marys would be required to improve up to 15 stop locations, at an approximate cost of \$37,500.

There are additional costs that may be associated with improving the on-board vehicle technology of the PC Connect fleet. These capital costs would be subject to negotiation with the service contractor but are estimated to be up to \$30,000 per vehicle, with one vehicle operating each of the routes. If the funding partners were able to secure OTIF funding, up to half of the capital funding could be covered by OTIF.

13.0 Implementation Plan

The implementation plan recognizes the immediate need to stabilize the PC Connect service, and the needs as identified in this service plan to enhance the overall network. Key components of the implementation plan include collaborating with municipal partners, finalizing specialized transit solutions, partnerships to seek further external funding opportunities. Further negotiations with the service contractor will also be required to finalize operational funding requirements and costs associated with the service.

13.1 Pre-Implementation: Next Steps (Year 0)

In the months leading up to the updated PC Connect system, the following steps should be undertaken to prepare for the changes in service:

- The current PC Connect system shall continue to be maintained until additional funding is secured to implement the new service changes.
- Initiate discussions with potential specialized transit partners, as identified in this report, to understand how specialized transit trips can be accommodated for PC Connect trips within a municipality.
- Enter into a shared service agreement with the following partners to fund the PC Connect system and recommended service plan based upon a negotiated funding formula, subject to council endorsement and approval:
 - Town of St. Marys
 - Municipality of North Perth
 - Municipality of West Perth
 - City of Stratford
- Work with Stratford Transit, as the managing body of the PC Connect system, to confirm administrative staffing requirements associated with long-term management of PC Connect.
- Develop an OTIF application with partner municipalities and potential specialized transit providers; and develop terms to regularly meet to monitor the service and discuss opportunities, challenges, and mitigations. This can also consider any costs to operate required specialized transit services for local trips within St. Marys and North Perth.
- Collaborate with Grand River Transit to determine potential service consolidations or route streamlining opportunities within Waterloo Region through Wilmot Township and Woolwich Township. This includes adjustments to shared infrastructure agreements to use GRT stops, terminals, or stations, as required.
- Work with the contractor (Voyago Transit) to develop and refine the route schedules, which includes the final determination of vehicles required for the service.
- Each partner municipality shall be responsible to construct the necessary AODA and IASR-compliant bus stop infrastructure within their jurisdiction, using standards as determined by PC Connect.

13.2 Plan Implementation (Years 1 and 2)

The following tasks are largely associated with the service enhancements as recommended within this report.

- Hire the additional staff members required to operate the service (based on the requirements identified in the Pre-Implementation Phase).
- Implement the preferred local specialized transit solutions in parallel with network improvements.
- Implement service and routing changes, as outlined in this service plan, to PC Connect Routes 1, 2, 3, and new Route 4.

13.3 Post-Implementation (Years 3 to 5)

- Explore the implementation of the combined Sunday and holiday route covering the Route 1, 3, and 4 alignments.
- Monitor demand and ridership on routes and continue to adjust service as appropriate.
- Continue ongoing periodic meetings with partner municipalities to discuss service performance, ridership figures, travel patterns, opportunities, and challenges faced by the service.
- Work with Stratford Transit to ensure adequate resourcing for them to oversee and administer the PC Connect system.
- Develop standards to ensure the long-term stability of the service and regularly engage with passengers to determine how the service could be improved.
- As the regional transit network in Southwestern Ontario continues to develop, new funding, partnership, operational, and service opportunities may exist. Regular meetings amongst partners should identify these opportunities and collaborate to most effectively meet the needs of residents.
- As the partner municipalities continue to grow, future enhancements, adjustments, or growth to the PC Connect network may be justified. In the future, planning should be integrated amongst the PC Connect system to best recognize the integrated nature of this regional transit system.

14.0

Conclusions

PC Connect has established the need for transit across St. Marys and North Perth, allowing new connections to be made and essential travel between municipalities in the region. By continuing and improving the PC Connect network, it will help ensure the future stability of the system. Priorities will include completing the application for OTIF funding, which will help kick-start recommendations contained within this plan. By having the member municipalities work towards a formalized governance and service agreement, and by allowing Stratford Transit to continue its stewardship of the network, PC Connect will be able to improve services as necessary over the long-term. This will ensure there are no longer major gaps in the transit network, allowing essential access to services, healthcare, school, employment, and social connections for years to come.

14.1

North Perth

North Perth will see improved regional and local transit connections, with a reintroduced Route 4 to Mitchell and Stratford, allowing more direct access to essential destinations. Through a phased approach to implementation, it will allow the transit network in North Perth to grow over time, adapting to the growing travel demand of the municipality to nearby urban centres. Other priority activities will include working alongside service partners to implement Route 4 through West Perth, and the installation of more bus stops in Listowel. Furthermore, North Perth should work with VON Perth Huron to develop specialized transit strategies to accommodate local travel demand within North Perth along the PC Connect corridors.

14.2

St. Marys

St. Marys will have new internal transit options for residents, allowing improved access to local stores, services, and community programming. Route 3 will be modified to improve service within the Town, while maintaining essential connections to London and improving travel options to Stratford. New steps include building the stop infrastructure necessary for the improved Route 3, working with St. Marys Mobility to develop a specialized transit strategy, and continue collaboration with PC Connect system partners.