City of Kingston
Report to Council
Report Number 24-159

To:	**Mayor and Members of Council**
From:	**Brad Joyce, Commissioner, Infrastructure, Transportation & Emergency Services**
Resource Staff:	**Ian Semple, Director, Transportation & Transit**
Date of Meeting:	**June 18, 2024**
Subject:	**Options for Transit Improvements**

Council Strategic Plan Alignment:

Theme: 3. Build an Active and Connected Community

Goal: 3.3 Improve public transit and active transportation options.

Executive Summary:

This report explores potential service options for Kingston's transit system based on Council's Strategic Plan, an evaluation of current services, and proposed principles for service improvement centered on accessibility, frequency, availability, and reliability of services.

Route options developed relate directly to Goal 3.3.1A in the Council Strategic Plan that directs staff to provide options for transit improvements, including but not limited to routes for Westbrook, Kingston Airport/Lemoine Point, and Amherstview. Options to extend service into Providence Care Hospital, provide enhanced service to Via Rail, and modifications to service to target downtown access are also included for review. The route options presented are based on the existing transit service delivery model, commonly referred to as conventional transit, that provides a fixed route, fixed schedule service. Where appropriate, the options include operating cost estimates representing the total annual service cost including labour, fuel, insurance, and asset replacement.

Council has previously approved the transit service pilot for Westbrook as part of the 2024 operating budget and this is scheduled to begin in September 2024 based on the details included in this report. In addition to this pilot, staff are recommending that modifications to Route 3, referred to as the "Downtown Circulator" in this report be implemented as a pilot project in fall 2024 and continue through 2025. This option provides direct access to Providence Care

Hospital and expands service from the Kingston Centre to the downtown via the North King's Town neighbourhood. Staff recognize that pilots are scheduled to start in the Fall 2024 and the data collected in 2024 will be limited and not ready in time for the 2025 budget operating budget development. To run appropriate pilots and collect meaningful data, staff are recommending that 2025 pilot costs be funded through the deferred Provincial Gas Tax funds.

As many of the route options would service, at least initially, low-demand and low-density areas, this report includes information on an alternate transit service model, On Demand transit, that may be a more viable option than the conventional service that has been modeled. On Demand transit services offer a flexible and cost-effective solution for low-density areas that is increasingly being used in many municipalities in Ontario. Advances in communication and dispatch technology have made On Demand transit more viable, allowing users to request rides via applications or call centers with minimal wait times. This model complements existing transit networks and can transition to scheduled services as demand grows.

In reviewing this service model, staff note that it may provide the best approach for service to Glenburnie, Elginburg, residential areas on Highway 2 east of CFB Kingston, and Lemoine Point. Given this potential, staff are recommending development of an On Demand service model for Kingston that could be implemented as an alternative to conventional transit to provide a more customer focused, competitive, and efficient option.

In addition to the recommended route options and service delivery review, there is a need to develop a short-term service strategy for the transit system to continue to build on the successes of the service to date while also preparing for the population and employment growth envisioned in the upcoming Official Plan and Integrated Mobility Plan. Staff are recommending that the service strategy be developed based on the principles of accessibility, frequency, availability, and reliability and be delivered by Q4 2025. This study will include data and recommendations on the two pilot routes and the On Demand service model for Kingston.

While this service strategy is under development Kingston Transit will continue to enhance existing routes and service frequencies to meet changing needs, address ridership pressures, and enhance accessibility. Changes planned for September 2024 include new early morning trips to serve Via Rail departures, minimum 30-minute frequency during weekday peak periods on all routes, and higher service frequency on Princess Street, Gardiners Road, Bath Road, Bayridge Drive, and King Street/Front Road during the daytime period. These enhancements can be committed for September 2024 as staffing within Kingston Transit is increasing with continued recruitment and expansion of operator training capacity.

Recommendation:

That Council direct staff to develop an On Demand transit service delivery pilot to low-demand, low-density, and rural areas with consideration for implementation costs to be included in future operating and capital budgets; and

That Council direct staff to refine the concept of the Downtown Circulator and implement the route as a pilot in fall 2024; and

That Council approve up to $1,000,000 from Provincial Gas Tax funds to support the 2025 operations of the Westbrook pilot, the Downtown Circulator pilot, and to develop the On Demand service delivery options as described in Report Number 24-159; and

That Council direct staff to engage residents and stakeholders on a new Kingston Transit Service Strategy based on the following service principles: Accessible, Frequent, Available and Reliable, to be delivered to Council by Q4 2025.

Authorizing Signatures:

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY COMMISSIONER

Brad Joyce, Commissioner, Infrastructure, Transporation & Emergency Services

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Lanie Hurdle, Chief Administrative Officer

Consultation with the following Members of the Corporate Management Team:

Paige Agnew, Commissioner, Growth & Development Services	Not required
Jennifer Campbell, Commissioner, Community Services	Not required
Neil Carbone, Commissioner, Corporate Services	Not required
David Fell, President & CEO, Utilities Kingston	Not required
Peter Huigenbos, Commissioner, Major Projects & Strategic Initiatives	Not required
Desirée Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer	

Options/Discussion:

The success of a transit route depends on several factors, but it must be accessible, available, frequent, and reliable to be attractive to customers. Building ridership to achieve those success factors requires:

- density of employment locations
- density of residents
- diverse land use
- a built environment that supports active transportation to and from transit stops (e.g. sidewalks, pathways)

Over the last decade, the City of Kingston made significant investments in its Express network and, through aggressive economic incentives such as the Transpass Program through employers, the Universal Pass program through post-secondary institutions, and policies regarding free fares for secondary students and children 14 and under. Between 2014 and 2019, ridership had increased to 6.9 million, an increase of 66%, an amount that is expected to be reached again in 2024.

The success of the Express network demonstrates well documented effects on ridership increases through frequent service, span of service, and competitiveness. The current overlap between the Express and base transit network leads to challenges in access and equity in mobility for residents. The networks overlap leads to services competing against each other versus creating increased value for existing and new customers.

As an example, the Montreal Street corridor is serviced by Route 1 and Express 801/802, where the effective headway, time between buses, is much lower for customers than operating a single service, even though the frequency of buses, number per hour, is higher. Table 1 provides the effective frequency to customers and buses per hour on the Montreal Street corridor, while Table 2 provides an overview of what could be achieved through an effective service with the same resources: frequent service throughout the service availability.

Table 1 – Montreal Street Corridor Service Levels – Route 1 and Express 801/802 Combined

	To Downtown/KGH		To Rideau Heights	
	Bus / hr	Headway (min)	Bus / hr	Headway (min)
Weekday AM Peak	5	20-30	5	20-30
Weekday Midday	2.5	30-40	2.5	30-40
Weekday PM Peak	5	20-30	5	20-30
Weekday Evening	2.5	30-40	2.5	30-40
Saturday	2.5	30-40	2.5	30-40
Sunday	1.5	40-60	1.5	40-60

Table 2 – Montreal Street Corridor Service Levels – Single Route Operation

	To Downtown / KGH		To Rideau Heights	
	Bus / hr	Headway (min)	Bus / hr	Headway (min)
Weekday AM Peak	3	15	3	15
Weekday Midday	3	15	3	15
Weekday PM Peak	3	15	3	15
Weekday Evening	1.5	30	1.5	30
Saturday	3	15	3	15
Sunday	1.5	30	1.5	30

Areas where transit service is absent or where transit ridership on scheduled service transit is lower is typically associated with lower densities and single land use types. Many of the areas being evaluated for transit service in this report would be characterized as low-density areas without a diverse range of users but where access is prohibitive due to the lack of options for residents. Consequently, the provision of scheduled transit service in the manner presently provided by Kingston Transit may be inefficient and cost prohibitive.

An increasingly effective option to address low-density areas is the use of an On Demand service model. On Demand service delivery options have existed for decades in a variety of different forms including previously in Kingston as part of a “Dial-A-Ride” service. Advances in communication and dispatching technology in the past five to seven years have made the On Demand approach much more viable for rural, suburban, and low-density areas, which is why more municipal transit organizations are employing the model.

The cities of Barrie, Belleville, and Guelph, as well as the Regional Municipalities of Durham and York have successfully launched On Demand networks to provide access to the public transit in their low-demand areas and rural areas. An On Demand service compliments and extends the public transit network that is available to residents and visitors. Modern On Demand systems provide customers opportunities to travel within a zone or to connect with a frequent transit route during periods of low demand. Requesting a ride is simple through an application or call centre with wait times comparable to 30-minute frequency, offering opportunities for flexible and spontaneous trip making not available with frequencies of 60 minutes or when service is not available at all. On Demand provides for an opportunity to build ridership in areas of low demand, with the objective the opportunity to transition to effective scheduled service.

This report outlines a set of principles that will act as a foundation for how the system should evolve to meet the growing and changing needs of customers today while planning for the expansion of service needed to support the growth envisioned in the Official Plan.

The report also outlines conventional service options for the areas identified in Council’s Strategic Priorities, particularly as it relates to Goal 3.3.1A, that directs staff to provide options

for transit improvements, including but not limited to routes for Westbrook, Kingston Airport/Lemoine Point and Amherstview. Options are also presented to extend service into Providence Care Hospital, provide enhanced service to Via Rail, and modifications to service to target downtown access. The total annual costs associated with the conceptual, conventional transit service options are provided and, where appropriate, an On Demand service delivery model is included in the options for consideration.

Recommendations on next steps, including several pilot program and policy development options are included in the conclusion of this report.

Kingston Transit System Principles

The following four principles are proposed to be used to build on the success of previous initiatives and further build transit ridership, with an overall objective to further increase transit share of daily trips. The principles are adapted from Transit Capacity and Quality of Service Manual, 3rd Edition, published by the Transportation Research Board which is regarded as a leader in research on public transportation.

Accessible

The transit network should be in proximity of residents, businesses, and major destinations, being mindful that the network needs to be competitive with auto travel times. Accessibility must extend beyond vehicles and include the entirety of the customer's trip from door to door.

Ongoing capital programs to expand and strengthen the pedestrian network, particularly in areas where gaps or barriers exist for transit, will make it easier for residents to access public transit in addition to ensuring the fleet and transit stops are accessible.

Frequent

The service frequency of a transit route provides for the best return on investment to stimulate ridership growth. Frequent service levels allow for flexible and spontaneous journeys, and result in faster travel times for customers. Introducing a Frequent Transit Network, that builds on the early success of the Express network of routes, would become the base of the transit network, where customers can connect from other transit routes and on-demand services from their local neighbourhood or employment location.

Table 3 below provides the customers' perspective in journey planning based on different levels of service frequency.

Table 3 - Frequency of Service Quality of Service

Service Frequency	Customer Perspective
5 to 10 minutes	· Customers do not need to check departure times. · All trips can be spontaneous with little impact to missed departure as wait times are minimized. · Connections between frequent routes do not need to be planned, resulting in faster travel times and more effective service delivery. · Customers will walk longer to access service (proximity to service can be longer distance).
12 to 15 minutes	· Frequent service. · Some customers may check departure times to minimize wait time. · Allows for travel options and flexibility, creating opportunities for spontaneous trip making. · Connections between frequent routes do not need to be planned, resulting in faster travel times and more effective service delivery. · Customers will walk longer to access service (proximity to service can be longer distance).
20 to 30 minutes	· Minimum service level to build ridership. · Customers check departure times to minimize wait time. · Customers adapt their schedule to that of the service; unattractive to choice customers (customers who have access to other transportation options). · Connections between routes should be planned but will result in inefficient service delivery (higher cost to deliver).
60 minutes	· Minimum service level to meet basic mobility needs. · Customers adapt their schedule to that of the service; unattractive to choice customers (customers who have access to other transportation options). · Connections between routes should be planned but will result in inefficient service delivery (higher cost to deliver).

Available

Service should be available from early morning to late evening to permit flexibility in trip making. Use of alternative service delivery, such as On Demand, would provide access to transit service when scheduled services are not effective in low-demand times and areas.

Table 4 provides the customers' perspective in journey planning based on different levels of service availability.

Table 4 - Service Span Quality of Service

Service Availability	Customer Perspective
Early morning to Late Night	· Service is available most of the time. · Workers and students who do not work or study during the typical daytime hours will not be stranded. · Transit is a viable option for all trips.
Early morning to Late Evening (10 p.m.)	· Service operates into the evening. · Allows for a range of trips to be made, other than just commuter trips. · Workers and students who work or study late do not have a transit option available.
Early morning to Evening (7-8 p.m.)	· Allows workers and students who usually work or study during typical daytime hours a transit option in case they stay late at work or school. · Transit is not an option for trips which require travel into the late evening. · Service is not available to allow transit to become a viable travel alternative for certain trips.
Peak Period Only	· Service is available for peak commuter trips, with limited or no midday and evening service. · Workers and students who work or study during traditional daytime hours but who may need to stay at work or school late or may need to travel home during the midday hours, do not have a transit option available. · Service is not available to allow transit to become a viable travel alternative for certain trips.

Reliable

To increase ridership and meet future objectives of increasing the proportion of trips on transit, the service needs to be reliable and provide competitive service compared to the automobile. Customers must have confidence that their trip can be completed each time and in-vehicle travel time should not be more than one and half times that of the car to maximize attractiveness and value to customers.

Table 5 below provides the customers' perspective with respect to in-vehicle travel time between public transit and auto.

Table 5 - Service Directness Quality of Service

Service Competitiveness	Customer Perspective
Travel time ratio > 1 - 1.25	· Comparable in-vehicle travel times by transit and auto. · A 40-minute commute by car; transit takes up to 10 minutes longer. · Very attractive to choice customers. · Frequent and direct service - customers will access service from greater distance (walk, park and ride).
Travel time ratio > 1.25 - 1.5	· Service becomes attractive to choice customers. · A 40-minute commute by car; transit takes up to 20 minutes longer. · Frequent and direct service - customers will access service from greater distances (walk, park and ride).
Travel time ratio > 1.5 - 1.75	· Round trip up to 1 hour longer by transit for a 40-minute one-way trip. · Service becomes unattractive to choice customers. · Emphasis on proximity (coverage) over directness of travel.
Travel time ratio > 1.75-2	· A transit trip takes up to twice as long as by car. · Unattractive to choice customers. · Emphasis on proximity (coverage) over directness of travel.
Travel time ratio > 2	· Tedious for all customers. · Unattractive to choice customers. · Emphasis on proximity (coverage) over directness of travel.

It is recommended that Kingston Transit develop a new, short-term service strategy through 2027 by Q4 2025 that will review ways that the existing operation can be aligned to the principles of being accessible, frequent, available and reliable. This service strategy will also prepare the system to plan for the population growth and evolving land uses in the city that will be envisioned in the Official Plan and Integrated Mobility Plan.

Strategic Priority and Council Specific Service Requests

Westbrook

The Westbrook area is in the northwest part of the city along the Princess Street corridor. The built-up area is characterized by residential, single-family homes only, which creates challenges in deploying effective and efficient scheduled transit service.

As part of the approved 2024 budget, Kingston Transit will be launching new scheduled service to the Westbrook area in September. Staff are recommending that the pilot run into 2025 in

order to gather meaningful data that would be incorporated in future system changes. It is proposed that the 2025 pilot operations be funded by Provincial Gas Tax funds since the 2025 operating budget will be prepared in the Fall 2024, at the same time as the pilot launch. It will operate as an extension of Route 19 during weekday peak periods, every 30 minutes. This initial offering of transit service is best suited to build transit ridership as it will be available during times that are typically most travelled.

Expanding the availability of scheduled service in the area beyond weekday peak period would require additional investment into the transit service. Table 6 below provides revenue hour increases and annual costs for expansion of the service beyond weekday peak periods.

Table 6 – Service Hour Requirements and Annual Costs for Westbrook Route Option

Day Type	Service	Revenue Hrs	Annual Cost
Weekday	Midday	1771	$ 140,257
Weekday	Evening	1265	$ 100,183
Saturday	6 a.m. to 11 p.m.	884	$ 70,010
Sunday	7:30 a.m. to 10 p.m.	1003	$ 79,434

The unique nature of single land use areas provides for opportunities to deploy alternative service delivery models that can provide access to mobility and build ridership, while ensuring an efficient and effective use of resources. An On Demand service could provide similar access to mobility to residents of Westbrook, but at a deployment cost up to 40% less than traditional scheduled service.

Kingston Airport / Lemoine Point

The Kingston Airport and Lemoine Point Conservation Area are located west of Lasalle Park neighbourhood in the southwest area of the city.

The Kingston Airport campus includes a passenger terminal, various air-related businesses, and a golf course. The passenger terminal is currently not operational, and the remaining businesses account for approximately 75 employees, with the golf course adding 35 employees during warmer season, all working various shift times throughout the day and over the week.

The Lemoine Point Conservation Area can be accessed via Coverdale Drive at the north and Front Road from the south. The north access through Coverdale Drive is of a single destination, does not support accessible stop infrastructure, and would require the construction of a bus loop to support transit operations. Access to Lemoine Point would be over one kilometre. Access through Front Road, to the south, would also require new accessible stop infrastructure, but could be combined into a future link with the Airport.

A routing to the Airport and Lemoine Point through south access would provide the most effective transit link however, based on land use, the demand is expected to be low. Fully

deploying service between Centre 70 and the Airport/Lemoine Point would require an investment of 5,633 revenue hours at a cost of $576,574 annually.

Table 7 - Service Hour Requirements and Annual Costs for Lemoine Point/Airport Route

Day Type	Service	Revenue Hrs	Annual Cost
Weekday	Peak – 30 minutes	2024	$ 290,754
Weekday	Until 11 p.m. – 30 minutes	2277	$ 180,330
Saturday	8 a.m. to 8 p.m. – 30 minutes	624	$ 49,419
Sunday	8 a.m. to 8 p.m. – 30 minutes	708	$ 56,071

Extending the existing network would not provide for an efficient use of resources. Linking these destinations into the public transit network would be best through a planned review of the transit network, where access can be integrated into the network to be competitive, convenient, and efficient. Considering the low demand of the current use of these areas, alternative service delivery strategies would be best considered in this area through an On Demand service and consideration of seasonal scheduled service during peak demand times, but at a deployment cost up to 40% less than scheduled service.

Amherstview

Public transit service between Amherstview and the City of Kingston is provided under contract to Loyalist Township and operated by Kingston Transit as Route 10. The transit service and fares are fully integrated with the broader transit network within the City of Kingston, providing for a seamless and consistent customer experience. The route links Amherstview to the Cataraqui Centre where customers can continue their journey on several routes linking destinations throughout the city.

The service levels, established by Loyalist Township provide for hourly service seven days per week: 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. Monday to Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. Saturday, and 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Sunday. Growing ridership is challenging as the service level is the minimum to meet basic mobility needs, and customers are required to adapt their schedule to that of the service.

Staff have been in contact with Loyalist Township related to requests for expanded service options as it pertains to the existing Amherstview service and areas contemplated as part of the Rural Transportation Study for Kingston and Neighbouring Municipalities. As a contracted service provider to Loyalist Township, any requests for new, modified, or expanded service received by Kingston Transit are provided to Township staff for review and the Kingston Transit provides details on required resourcing and increased cost to the Township.

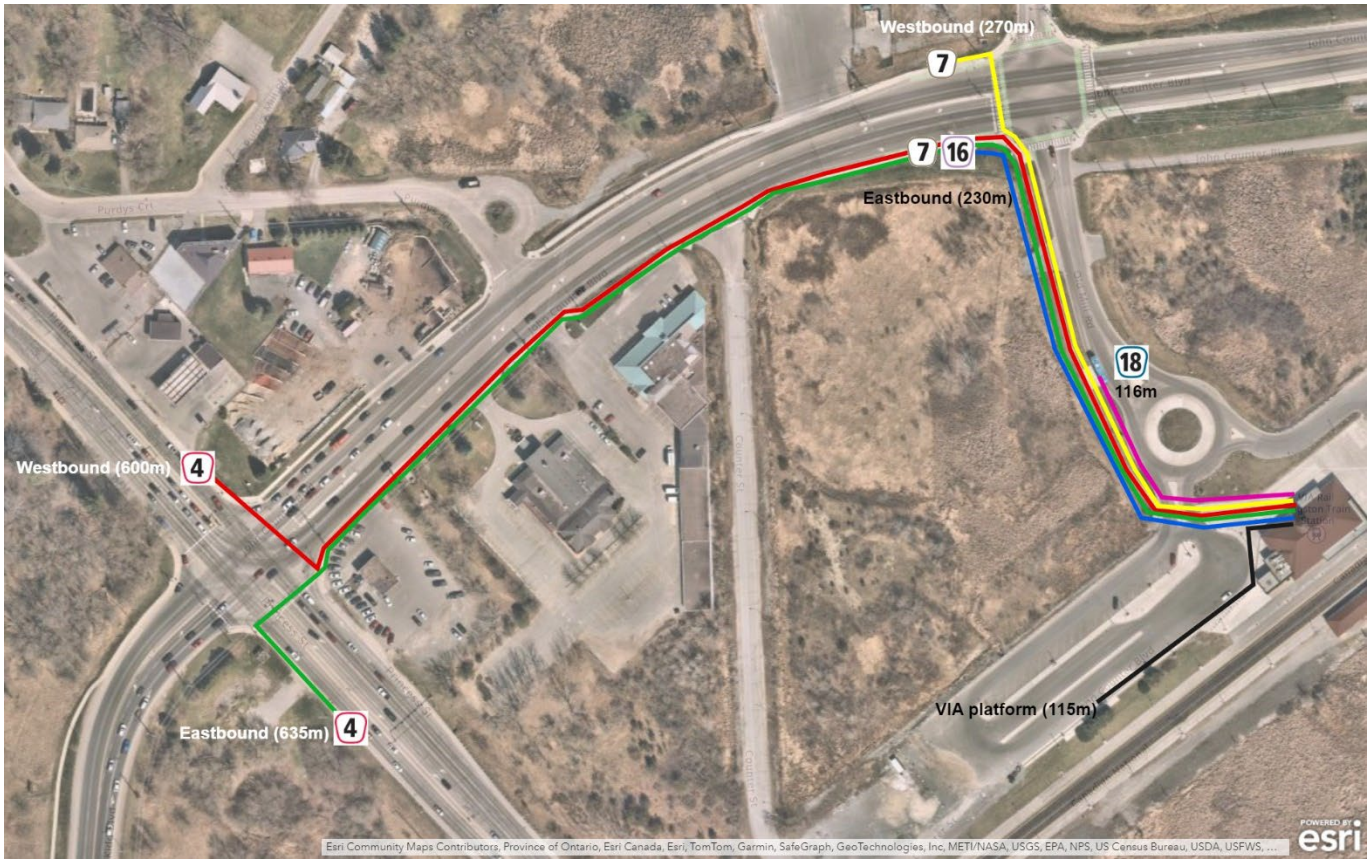
Loyalist staff have indicated they are exploring potential funding opportunities to allow service or frequency expansion but have not provided details at this point to allow Kingston Transit to model options.

Via Rail Station – John Counter Boulevard

The Kingston Via Rail Station is located on the southeast corner of Princess Street and John Counter Boulevard, with the station building setback approximately 150 metres from John Counter Boulevard. On average, 400 customers transit to and from Kingston each day by VIA Rail, with Fridays and Sundays being busier days.

Transit access to the VIA Rail Train Station is available through four transit routes: 4, 7, 16 and 18. Transit stops are located on John Counter Boulevard, Princess Street, and on-site as illustrated below. Only Route 18 accesses the Train Station property, however the stop is only 115 metres closer to the station than those located on John Counter Boulevard.

Figure 1 – Kingston Transit Stop Proximity to VIA Rail Station



Diverting Routes 4 and 7 into the station lands would not provide significant gains in ridership for Kingston Transit. The added routings, while short, would present a significant inconvenience to riders and may present greater ridership losses than potential ridership gains.

The western terminus of Route 16 currently is located at John Counter Boulevard and Old Mill Road (Via Rail Station access road). This route will be diverted into the Rail Station in September 2024, travelling north on Portsmouth, west on John Counter Boulevard, ending at the transit stop at the Via Rail Station. Similarly, Route 18 will be adjusted to travel north on Portsmouth to John Counter Boulevard to access the Via Rail Station.

Figure 2 – Route 16 Into Via Rail Station – Fall 2024

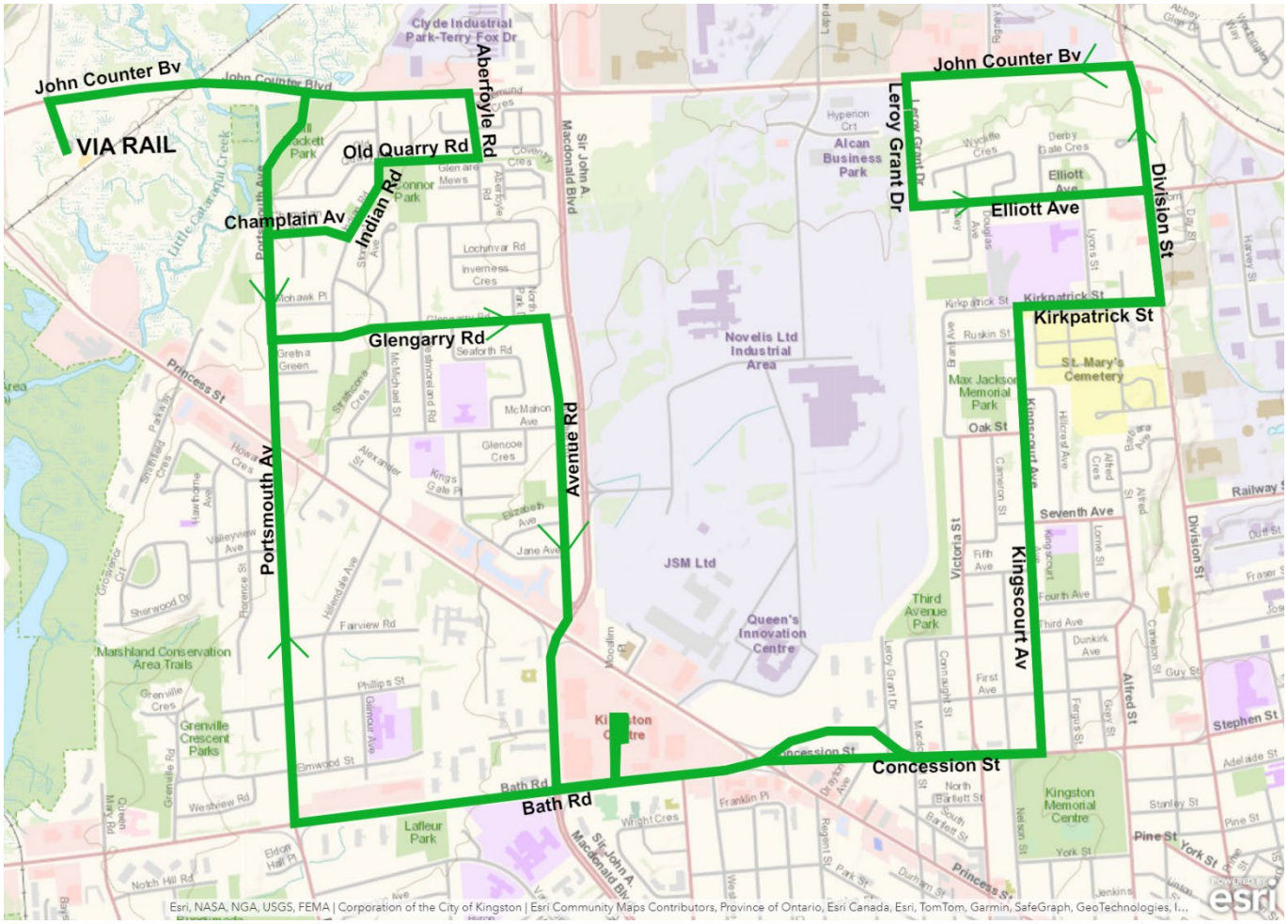
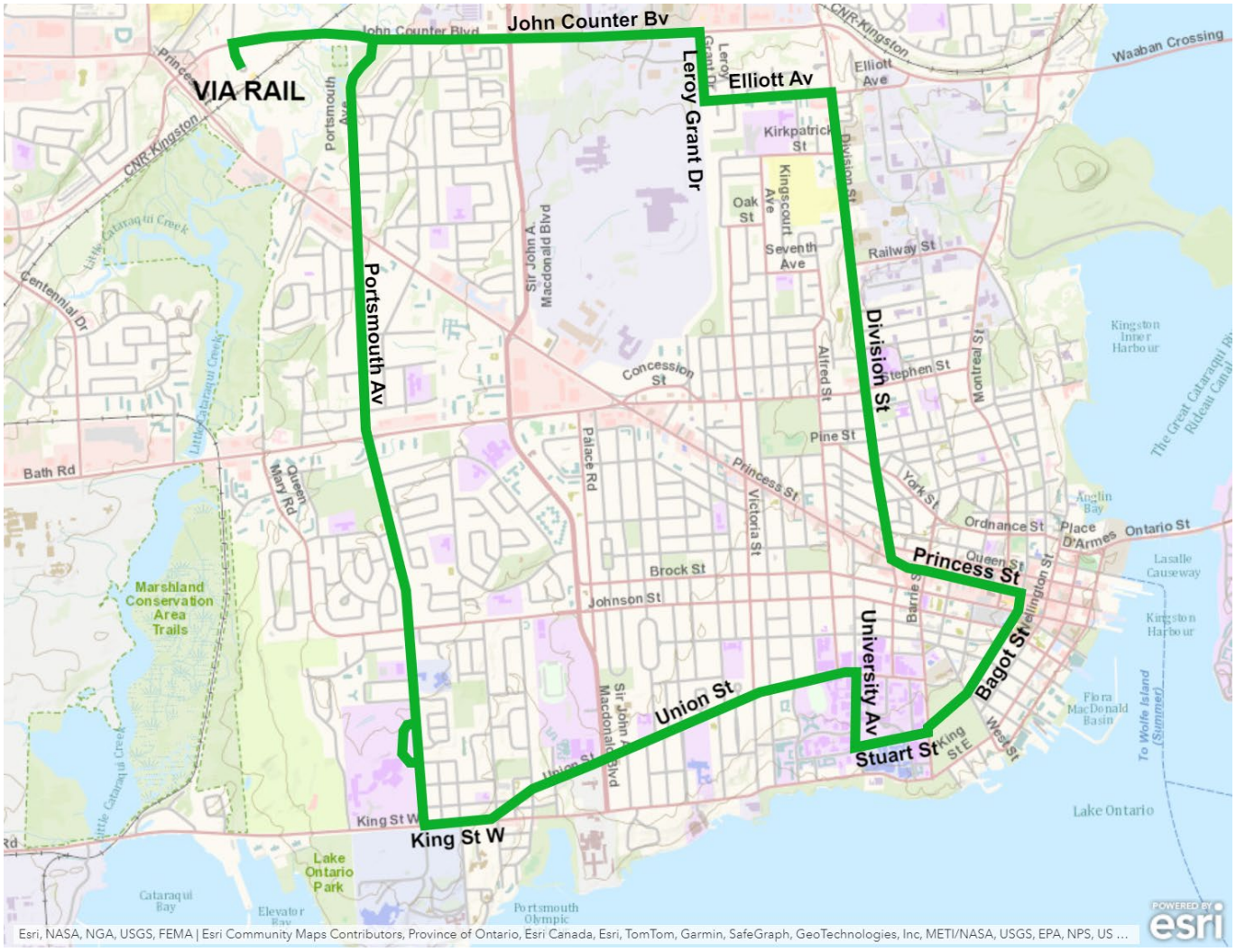


Figure 3 – Route 18 into Via Rail Station – Fall 2024



The City and Via Rail have been in discussions regarding strategies to improve the customer experience for those travelling to and from the Rail Station. Improvements being considered include wayfinding, additional customer amenities, and transit stop improvements. Examples of these improvements include enhanced signage to guide and inform customers on how to access Kingston Transit or make their way to the station, real-time arrival and departure information at the stops via electronic boards, and opportunities to have fare options available at the train station.

The City has also identified opportunities to create pedestrian pathways from the Via Rail site to Princess Street to better access the most frequent transit service. Via Rail is supportive of this work and in making adjustments to their site to improve the customer experience.

Providence Care Hospital

The Providence Care Hospital (PCH) is located near the intersection of King Street and Portsmouth Avenue, in proximity to Lake Ontario Park and St. Lawrence College. The hospital campus is significantly set back from King Street and, as a result, the nearest transit stops are located approximately 650 metres, a 6-minute walk, from the main entrance. The hospital provides paid parking with a maximum daily rate of $6. Parking for patients, clients, visitors, and volunteers is located closest to the campus buildings, while parking identified for staff is located furthest away.

PCH administered a survey in fall 2023 to the campus population. The survey found that approximately 26% of patients, clients, and visitors used Kingston Transit/Kingston Access Bus to the hospital, a proportion that goes up to 29.5% when accounting for City of Kingston residents only. According to the survey, providing a scheduled service onto hospital property, 85% of respondents indicated they would use the service. Respondents also indicated that 53% used some kind of assistive and/or medical device, such as a mobility device or oxygen tank.

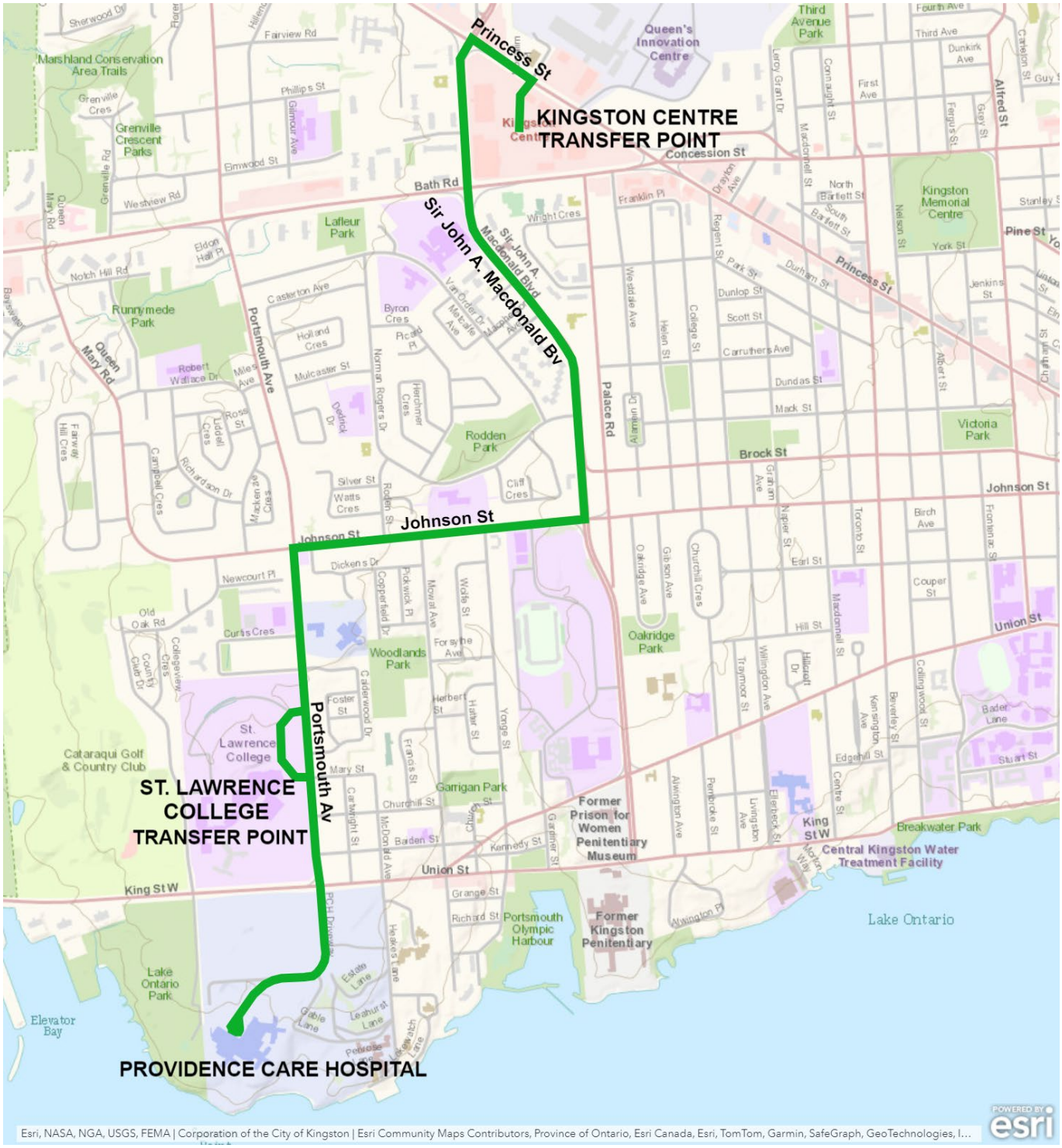
Based on the information from the survey, approximately 44 individuals used public transit (Kingston Transit or Kingston Access Bus) to the hospital. The survey would suggest that an additional 84 new customers would use public transit should a stop be available on property. The survey indicates that more than half of customers require an assistive device, where they would most likely use Kington Access Bus to travel to the hospital.

To address this request for service to the PCH site, there are three options that can be considered:

Option 1 involves diverting any of the current routes in the area onto the hospital lands. This could generate between 40 to 84 net new trips but is expected to decrease ridership overall as the diversion would add up to five minutes of travel time to existing customers and these customers may perceive it as an even longer unnecessary detour due to the low demand. This could be a particular deterrent for the many choice customers commuting on these routes from the west end to Queen’s University, Kingston General Hospital, and the downtown. Maintaining transfers on routes diverted into the site would also be challenging based on existing routing.

Option 2 is a new service that could be launched between PCH and the Kingston Centre, via Portsmouth, St. Lawrence College, and Sir John A. Macdonald Boulevard. This new route would operate every 30 minutes, seven days per week, from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., and connect with many of Kingston Transit’s route to most areas of the city. This is expected to require an additional 4,732 additional revenue hours at an annual cost of $505,218.

Figure 4 – New Route Option to Provide Direct Service to Providence Care Hospital



A third option would be to integrate the PCH on site access into a new or expanded route to minimize the incremental costs, such as the changes proposed to Route 3 as discussed in the next section.

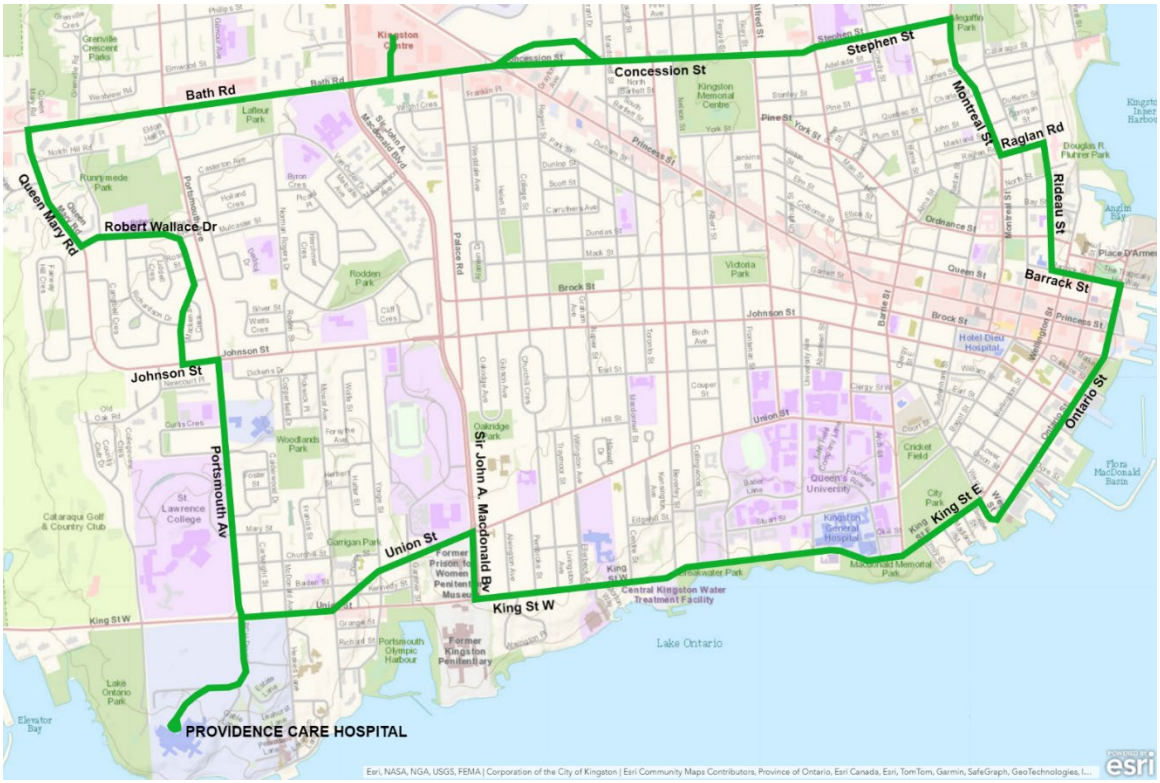
In addition to these conventional service options, the City and PCH have been exploring opportunities to deploy a shuttle option on the PCH land through a number of partnership and grant opportunities.

Downtown Circulator

In addition to the specific transit route or service requests identified in the Strategic Plan, Council also adopted a priority to develop a targeted plan for downtown access including transit, parking, and Park & Ride options. Staff have been reviewing options to support this priority through the addition or modification of transit service that could target access to many locations within the downtown. Through this analysis, a preliminary route option, identified as the Downtown Circulator, is being developed to deliver on this priority.

The new Downtown Circulator route would incorporate the current Route 3 and be extended to include service along Concession and Stephen to Montreal Street, Kingston Memorial Centre/Culligan Water Park, Rideaucrest Home, Slush Puppie Place, and the Ferry Terminal. The route would also connect all three hospitals: Hotel Dieu Hospital, Kingston General Hospital and Providence Care Hospital.

Figure 5 – Downtown Circulator Route Enhancement to the Route 3



This new route would operate following the current Route 3 availability and frequency and connect with Kingston Transit's network to all areas of the city. The total investment for this service would be 5,893 revenue hours, at an annual cost of $597,165. Staff are recommending that the pilot run into 2025 in order to gather meaningful data that would be incorporated in

future system changes. It is proposed that the 2025 pilot operations be funded by the Provincial Gas Tax funds since the 2025 operating budget will be prepared in the Fall 2024, at the same time as the pilot launch.

Rural Kingston

The rural area of the City of Kingston has an estimated population of 19,000 spread across 83% of the City's land area, or approximately 374 square kilometres. Scheduled transit service is not available in the rural area today; however six Park & Ride locations are available where individuals can connect to the frequent transit network within the urban area. The current locations are Kingston Gospel Temple, Centre 70 Arena, Innovation Drive, INVISTA Centre, Jim Beattie Park, and Montreal Street at Highway 401. New Park & Ride locations are also being explored along the frequent transit network corridors.

Providing access to mobility for residents and visitors travelling between the rural and urban areas, and within the rural area, is challenging through scheduled transit service. Details and high-level costs of options to provide rural service in this manner are outlined in EITP-24-004 Rural Transportation Study Update for Kingston and Neighbouring Municipalities. At present, the options in this report are pending commitments from the partner municipalities on costs and operation.

Exploring options to provide transit service through an alternative service delivery model, such as On Demand, could provide an effective and efficient service to rural Kingston residents, especially when combined with new or expanded park and ride options. On Demand services, through dynamic service delivery, can provide a service level that is accessible, available, competitive, and with short wait times, especially for the hamlet areas such as Glenburnie, Elginburg, and residential areas along Highway 2.

Further study is required to determine operational requirements and costing for how this model could be deployed to rural areas of the city however this can be undertaken without commitment or integration with neighbouring townships as outlined in the rural transportation study.

Next Steps and Future Considerations

Using the service principles outlined in this report and the route option concepts that have been developed to address areas identified in the Strategic Priorities staff will undertake the following next steps:

Pilot Service Development and Implementation

It is recommended that the new Downtown Circulator (modified Route 3), which includes new access to Providence Care Hospital and supports enhanced access to the downtown, be launched as a pilot for the fall period. This pilot can be run within the existing approved operating budget for fall 2024 and will be incorporated in the 2025 operating plan with funding allocated from Provincial Gas Tax funds, if necessary.

In addition, the previously approved pilot transit service to Westbrook will launch with service operating during morning and afternoon weekday peak periods. This pilot can be run within existing approved operating budget for fall 2024 with continuation through 2025 with annualized costs included in the 2025 operating budget.

To address the remaining new service areas outlined in this report, it is recommended that staff develop an implementation plan for a pilot of On Demand transit service delivery to rural areas of Kingston, Kingston Airport, Lemoine Point, and other low-density, seasonal, or low-demand areas to be included for consideration in the 2025 operating and capital budget process.

September Service Changes

The following service changes will be made to existing routes and service frequencies to meet changing needs, address ridership pressures, and enhance accessibility:

- New early morning trips on Routes 7 and 18 to meet Via Rail early morning departures.
- Modify Routes 16 and 18 to provide closest possible access to Via Rail station.
- Enhance service levels to a minimum 30-minute frequency during weekday peak periods on all routes.
- Introduce frequent transit service: minimum 15-minutes: weekdays: 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., and weekends 9:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. on the following corridors:
    - 701/702: Gardiners Road and Bath Road
    - 501/502: Bayridge Drive and King Street/Front Road
    - 4/501/502: Princess Street

These changes will be operated within the approved operating budget for 2024 as part of existing service levels and can be committed to as staffing levels have increased at Kingston Transit with increased recruitment and training capacity.

Policy and Strategy Development

To begin planning for additional growth, evolving needs of riders, and changes in residential and employment areas, the following policy and strategy work will begin in Q3 2024:

- Develop a new Kingston Transit Service Strategy to outline service to 2027 by Q4 2025 based on the following service principles: Accessible, Frequent, Available and Reliable.
- Review and modernize customer policies to align with industry best practices.

In addition, staff will begin planning for several future initiatives to include:

- Developing the Transit Stop, Terminals and Station Guidelines, to outline infrastructure requirements, including new and future customer amenity requirements.
- Customer Journey Mapping to understand the specific actions customers take to travel with Kingston Transit, identify barriers and challenges for different markers, provide for solution-based initiatives that would best ensure most effective resolution.

- Developing a Fare Strategy to review and modernize fares and incentives to support a shift to alternative transportation as well as align with industry best practices and technology trends.

Indigenization, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility (IIDEA) Considerations

This report provides information on service options that could be included in future transit service expansion or modification. The scheduled transit service provided by the City of Kingston provides an accessible fleet and constructs transit stops that are accessible and connected to the active transportation network. Specific IIDEA concerns can also be addressed during the pilot programs and policy reviews that are planned.

Financial Considerations

Cost estimates for specific route additions or expansions are presented in this report for information purposes only. The proposed pilot programs, service level changes, and policy development work proposed for 2024 can be accommodated in the existing approved operating and capital budgets.

Staff are recommending that Council approve up to $1,000,000 from the Provincial Gas Tax (PGT) to support the 2025 pilots' operations since the 2025 operating budget will be prepared in the Fall 2024, at the same time as the pilot launch. Sufficient deferred PGT funds exist to support the recommendation.

Contacts:

Christopher Norris, General Manager, Kingston Transit, 613-546-4291 extension 2116

Other City of Kingston Staff Consulted:

Lana Foulds, Director, Financial Services

Exhibits Attached:

None