

## Staff Report

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**Report To:** Operations Committee  
**Report From:** Rick Chappell, Associate Supervisor of Environmental Services  
**Meeting Date:** March 16, 2023  
**Report Code:** OP-23-008  
**Subject:** Transit Service Delivery

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### Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report OP-23-008 respecting Transit Service Delivery, the Operations Committee recommends that City Council receive the report for information purposes.

### Highlights:

- Voyago began operating the City's transit system on Saturday, August 27, 2022.
- The 2023 budgets for conventional and mobility transit are \$1,042,490.00 and \$260,622.00, respectively.
- The permanent transit fleet should be in-service in late March 2023.

### Strategic Plan Alignment:

This report supports the delivery of Core Service.

### Previous Report/Authority:

[Transit Service Options OP-22-002](#)

[Transit Service Delivery OP-22-024](#)

[Transit Service Summer Pilot Project OP-22-025](#)

## **Background:**

The City of Owen Sound undertook a Transit Optimization Review process to assess the existing transit service delivery model and identify areas of improvement to optimize the current transit system.

This study analyzed and evaluated the City's existing fixed-route system, including route coverage, ridership, schedule adherence, and infrastructure perspectives.

Voyago began operating the City's transit system on Saturday, August 27, 2022.

## **Analysis:**

### **Fleet**

As a result of manufacturing delays, Voyago provided an interim fleet when they began operations on August 27, 2022. The interim fleet comprised four Girardin G5 High Floor Lift Equipped Buses. These buses have a ten-seat capacity with additional space for five wheelchairs. A larger bus with greater power was provided to address the increased passenger numbers for the East Bayshore route. This bus has 18 seats with room for an additional six standing and two wheelchairs. Due to increased ridership, a second 18-seat bus was operated on the Core route in late October. The interim fleet was all new stock.

Voyago's communication with the manufacturer showed that the long-term fleet was expected to arrive in the first quarter of 2023 and consists of five Arboc Spirit of Freedom low-floor ramp-equipped buses. These buses will also be new stock. The capacity of these buses is 18 seats with room for an additional six standing and two wheelchairs.

The permanent fleet is expected to be put into service in late March 2023, including front-mounted bike carriers and the Consat operating system.

### **Data Management**

As part of the Transit Optimization Study, the City was recommended to acquire a transit data management system to assess transit operations better. As a result, the City entered into a contract with Consat Telematics. Consat Telematics is a world leader in telematics systems for public transport. It is currently endorsed and supported by Metrolinx and its purchasing group. Consat is a data-driven system that provides automatic

following stop announcements, external and internal signs, external and internal speakers, real-time monitoring, and automated passenger count information.

The Consat software will also allow the City to comply with Provincial accessibility standards that require all public transit systems to include audio and visual announcements for stops. This means that, while riders will be able to hear and see the announcements on buses, they will also be able to listen to announcements from outside the buses, thanks to the installation of external speakers.

The Consat System gathers a significant amount of data that, when reviewed and analyzed, can help improve passenger experience and the overall health of the transit system. This system provides recurring and custom reports and includes such information as:

- Ridership reports,
- Planned service versus actual,
- Route punctuality,
- Driver performance, as well as,
- Custom reports.

Having a robust data partner will allow the City to analyze the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the Transit system on a go-forward basis and in real time. As transit costs significantly impact the City's overall tax-supported budget, definitive data will provide the most significant insight for Staff and Council. Robust data will also allow Staff to bring a more fulsome transit operations report to the Operations Committee.

## **Marketing**

Staff have been working on a "Get On the Bus" marketing effort that kicked off in early September 2022. The campaign included the development of a new logo and signage for Owen Sound Transit, an updated transit brochure and new signage at the transit terminal featuring the new logo. City staff also appeared on "Open Line" on CFOS with Dave Carr to promote City transit. City staff recently attended an open house at Georgian College for international students, where they were available to answer questions about the City's transit system.

## Ridership

### Conventional Transit

	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>October</b>	16,660	11,618	9,611	10,086
<b>November</b>	15,767	10,827	10,959	9,910
<b>December</b>	15,311	11,728	11,191	12,777
<b>TOTAL</b>	47,738	34,170	31,761	32,773

The passenger counts above represent an increase of approximately 3.2% in ridership over the last three months of 2022 compared to 2021. It should be noted that passenger counts are done manually and that the number of days in service also affects the counts (bus cancellations due to inclement weather would affect this); however, ridership is still down approximately 31.3% from 2019, which was pre-pandemic.

More reliable ridership numbers will be available when the Consat software is in place and the permanent fleet (four 18-passenger buses) is in service.

### Mobility Transit

	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>October</b>	667	237	395	431
<b>November</b>	646	245	518	400
<b>December</b>	548	266	410	520
<b>TOTAL</b>	1,861	748	1,323	1,351

The number of trips above represents an increase of approximately 2.11% in ridership over the last three months of 2022 compared to 2021 however it represents a decrease of approximately 27.4% from 2019 (pre-pandemic).

## Financial Implications:

The 2022 budgets for conventional and mobility transit were \$1,138,500.00 and \$284,625.00, respectively. As a result of the lower-than-expected bids during the RFP process, the 2023 budgets for conventional transit and mobility transit are \$1,042,490.00 and \$260,622.00.

It should be noted that Voyago's price, quoted as part of the Request for Proposal to provide conventional transit services in the first year of the contract beginning August 27 and providing the same level of service as the previous provider (30-minute service) is \$951,740 (adjusted for net HST and low-floor buses). For mobility transit, the cost is \$239,698 (adjusted for net HST and low-floor buses). However, the overall quoted price for transit service did not include any costs associated with Consat Transit Data and the one-time charges related to the bus-mounted bicycle racks and newly installed fare boxes.

In discussions with City staff, Voyago was amenable to providing these additional items as part of the overall transit contract with the City, allowing the City to forego additional upfront capital costs and tie these items to the cost of transit operations, therefore allowing the City to capture the actual hourly price of transit service within one contract.

#### Transit Revenues

	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>Fares</b>	176,595.92	171,100.28	72,245.00	119,156.73
<b>Passes</b>	162,516.00	154,080.00	104,895.00	130,300.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	339,111.92	325,180.28	177,140.00	249,456.73

The 2022 total fare revenues represent an increase of 40.8% increase from 2021 however, they are still 26.4% below the 2019 revenues (pre-pandemic).

The lower total fare revenues in 2021 are the result of less travel due to Covid, including residents working from home and transit rider limit on the bus. The 2023 revenues will be a better representation of the revenues that the City can expect post-pandemic.

### **Communication Strategy:**

Posting of regular minutes of Committee and Council meetings.

Transit riders are able to direct inquiries to transit terminal staff at (519) 376-9139 or through email at [TransitTerminal@owensound.ca](mailto:TransitTerminal@owensound.ca).

Additional information, including rates, bus routes and maps and transit hours, can be found at [Owen Sound Transit - Owen Sound](#).

**Consultation:**

Manager of Engineering Services, Director of Public Works & Engineering, City Manager, and Voyago staff.

**Attachments:**

None.

**Recommended by:**

Lara Widdifield, Director of Public Works & Engineering.

**Submission approved by:**

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Rick Chappell at [rchappell@owensound.ca](mailto:rchappell@owensound.ca) or (519) 376-4440 ext. 1226.