

INCREASING AFFORDABLE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS IN THE REGION OF WATERLOO: A SELECTION OF OPTIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Increasingly, transportation is being recognized as essential to quality of life. Especially in a geographically dispersed region such as the Region of Waterloo, transportation is critical for obtaining basic needs such as food and medical attention, for getting to/from work, school and other activities and to participate in community. There are few locations or neighbourhoods, if any, where all amenities and necessities can be easily reached without some form of transportation besides walking. For those living on limited incomes, lack of affordable transportation is a significant barrier.

Waterloo Regional government funds an innovative program to help address this situation. The Transit for Reduced Incomes Program (TRIP) provides discounted monthly bus passes to patrons with incomes below a set level that apply for the program. TRIP is collaboratively administered by government and non-government partners.¹ The number of one-month passes sold through the program has increased ten-fold since its beginning in 2002, with over 13,000 passes sold in 2008 to the roughly 1500 people enrolled in the program. Despite this success, there are always waiting lists of up to a few hundred people wanting to apply to the program

Waterloo Regional Council continues to be interested in ways of increasing affordable transportation options for people with low incomes. In fact, this objective is among those listed in the current strategic planning cycle. Under the lead of the Social Services department, and in collaboration with the committee that oversees

TRIP, this report presents the results of research and consultations directed toward this objective.

Our investigation began with background research that identified activities, programs and other types of support offered in the Region of Waterloo and elsewhere. Given the importance of public transit as an affordable transportation option, there was a particular focus on Grand River Transit (GRT) and transit agencies in similarly-sized communities. Information was gathered through surveys and interviews. Results are presented in the report: *Investigating Affordable Transportation Options in the Region of Waterloo with a Focus on Public Transit*². Waterloo Region is a leader in the area of transportation assistance – primarily because TRIP is a relatively unique program. A brief summary of the few noteworthy programs similar to TRIP, as well as other transit/transportation programs or support are listed in the report.

Some of the supports listed in the *Investigating Affordable Transportation Options* report:

- TRIP-like passes (Calgary, Hamilton, Victoria)
- Neighbourhood pass (Colorado)
- FRED (Free Rides Everywhere Downtown, Halifax)
- Family travel (up to 4 youth with anyone using any pass, Victoria)
- Grand River Car Share transportation bank
- carpoolzone.ca

¹ Details on the program can be found in the *TRIP Operating Principles and Procedures*, available from TRIP partners.

² Report is available at http://civics.ca/docs/afftrans_investigate.pdf

The second stage of our investigation brought key people together to share their ideas and experience around managing or creating affordable transportation programs and public transit with the objective of identifying and prioritizing options that might increase support to people with low incomes. An underlying assumption throughout the whole project was and is that the identification, development and selection of viable strategies requires a collaborative approach.

In total, four meetings were held. Participants included a Regional councilor, Regional staff, and people from a range of not-for-profit agencies in Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge and Waterloo Region Townships. (See participant lists in Appendix 1.) Group activities included brainstorming, facilitated discussion and a number of other exercises. Throughout discussion, the emphasis was on options that have the potential to be effectively implemented here in the Region.

This report presents the outcomes of this consultation and is intended to provide direction for action. The overarching goal is to effect change; change that will benefit people with low incomes.

Report outline

This report is divided in two sections. The first section provides notes from the brainstorming sessions, including topics such as objectives, values and principles, and experiences of patrons and providers. As noted below, this information was not the focus of further discussion, evaluation or prioritization. **The first section of this report, then, is a set of draft working lists rather than a definitive set of suggestions or priorities.** The lists are included in order to provide depth and context to the rest of the report and to document the discussion.

In the second section, there are descriptions of the priority options, notes of additional preferred options and a list of other ideas that were mentioned. **This second section is the main focus of this report, presenting the results of the consultation: the priority options that were selected through discussion and evaluation.**

The aforementioned document – *Investigating Affordable Transportation Options* – should be considered a companion report

to this report. It provides some additional detail and examples relevant to programs and options mentioned here.

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Transportation and implementation issues

In thinking about affordable transportation and the selection and implementation of programs that increase affordable access to transportation for people with low incomes, there are several issues to consider:

- As noted above, transportation is an essential requirement for sustaining quality of life.
- In a dispersed region such as Waterloo, where people are almost compelled to rely on cars because few practical, alternatives exist, securing affordable transportation is difficult for people living on low incomes. This limits their ability to access work and basic services and amenities, including the ability to access Regional services and programs designed for their benefit.
- Affordability involves more than just money. Costs include – but are certainly not limited to – time, convenience, experience and accessibility. At the extreme, free transportation that does not take you where you need to be or that is uncomfortable is of no benefit.
- Affordability and service/accessibility go hand-in-hand. The consultation reported on here focused on affordability – a focus that is not meant to diminish the importance of service and accessibility.
- There are many rural, suburban and industrial areas in the Region that are not serviced by public transit. Residents and others travelling in/to these areas use whatever means are available, even if less than ideal. The majority of people with low incomes, however, live, work and frequent areas in the cities. For this reason – and because public transit is practical, already in place and often more affordable – public transit has been a key focus of this work (although not to the exclusion of other considerations).
- The dispersed nature of the Region means that there are many challenges to planning and maintaining a good public transit system. Nonetheless, Grand River Transit has one of the lowest per-capita public-investment costs (and one of the lower average fares) for public transit among communities of similar size. The intention here is to build on the good work that the

GRT and its partners are already doing; to compliment current programs and services rather than to compromise them in an attempt to increase affordability.

- There are many government departments, agencies and organizations in the Region that work with or on behalf of people with low incomes, including families, children, women, people with disabilities, people who are unemployed, etc. Collaboration among these departments, agencies and organizations is already apparent and is an asset to build upon when developing ways to increase access to affordable transportation.
- In considering new options, financial funding is often a key consideration for assessing viability. It is important to remember that administrative costs can also be substantial. While this is a burden to be considered, it may also present opportunities for partnership and collaboration.

Collaboration

A secondary intention of this work – especially in the consultation meetings – was to bring people together and facilitate understanding and collaboration. The Region, supported by the efforts of the TRIP committee, is committed to increasing options for people with low incomes, but it cannot fully resolve the challenges on its own. The priority options discussed in this report are recommended as a focus for Regional government; however, there are many other ideas that could be viable options when carried out in partnership and collaboration with other agencies or organizations committed to enhancing the lives of people living in the Region, in particular, people with low incomes. Increased and improved options might also be realized by considering the needs of people with low incomes in the design and implementation of *any* transportation/transit-related improvements or programs occurring as ‘normal business’ across the Region. It is hoped that by bringing different people together to discuss these ideas and concerns that more affordable transportation options – and the collaboration and considerations required to implement them – are more likely to occur in the future.

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We would like to thank all of those who took time to participate in the consultation meetings for their involvement. In their willingness to share their insights and ideas lies the potential for the development of options that will address the transportation challenges faced by people with low incomes.

TRIP Committee participants:

- David Dirks, Director, Employment & Income Support, Social Services, RoW
- John Cicuttin, Manager, Transit Development, RoW
- Sandy Roberts, Manager, Marketing & Communications, GRT, RoW
- Gethyn Beniston, Principal Planner, Transit, RoW
- Stephanie Mancini and Jason Spencer, The Working Centre
- Susan Grimes and David Gorman, Lutherwood
- Beth Dempster and Eric Tucs, Civics Research Cooperative

SECTION 1: BRAINSTORMING RESULTS

In two successive meetings with invited participants, brainstorming and discussion (in large and small groups) led to the identification of many ideas and options and a range of associated considerations. Topics included potential program objectives, values and principles and existing and projected tensions and challenges. Participants also shared experiences from their own work and stories about the people they work with.

The final two meetings were targeted toward prioritizing the options that had been identified. In consequence, much of the material identified in the brainstorming sessions did not receive additional treatment. There were opportunities between meetings for participants to comment on summaries and opportunities at meetings

to gather a general impression of the results, however there was no specific discussion to sort, prioritize or evaluate many of the ideas that had been expressed. **This unworked information is presented in this section of the report and should be recognized for what it is: a set of rough lists from brainstorming and discussion. It is not a definitive set of suggestions or priorities.**

The ideas have been sorted to make presentation easier and are included here in order to provide some depth and context for the remainder of the report. Their documentation is also seen as a way to facilitate further discussion around the objectives, principles, etc. that might be considered relevant for any program or support that is to be implemented.

Objectives

As noted in the introduction, the starting point for this research and consultation was a strategic objective of the Region: To increase affordable transportation options for people with low incomes in the Region of Waterloo.

Following from this, the TRIP committee set the following two objectives for the consultation meetings:

- To develop a few good, implementable answers to the question: *How can we increase affordable transportation options for people with low incomes in the Region of Waterloo?*
- To foster collaboration and improved understanding among those working to increase affordable transportation options for people with low incomes.

One of the topics covered in brainstorming was: What are relevant objectives for affordable transportation initiatives? Suggestions are listed in the boxes on the right and on the next page. They were not revisited during the meetings or afterwards to select or prioritize them in any way, but have been roughly categorized for presentation here. There are two

Brainstorming results: Objectives directed toward increasing options for people with low incomes

- Meet the needs of our core group of transit users (regular and frequent users who will likely be regular and frequent users for some time to come): people with low incomes.
- Increase support/programs to meet demands (e.g. additional funding for TRIP to address the waiting lists)
- Respond to customers – those who do not have resources to ride, including those with special needs
- Grow the transit system, but not the fares.
- Get social services (if not social agencies) out of the public transit/transportation business.
- Lower the fares for people with low incomes that are above LICO (i.e. don't use LICO as the cut-off point, people above LICO still struggle to meet their needs)

¹ This point assumes that core users of Grand River Transit are people with low incomes. This is a supposition and has not been confirmed by the GRT or this research.

categories – objectives that are specifically relevant to increasing affordable transportation options for people with low incomes and those that are more general. The latter would indirectly benefit people with low incomes by benefitting the population generally.

The objectives directly relevant to people with low incomes reflect some of the needs, challenges and concerns described that were later described or noted by participants (see below). In particular, these drew attention to the need for additional/further support.

Brainstorming results: Objectives of more general relevance

- Sustainable and accessible public transit and transportation 365 days of the year all day and night for all residents
- Better transportation/active transportation infrastructure (for everyone)
- Apply resources and expertise wisely
- Collaborate
- More:
 - people on transit, more diversity of people on transit
 - endorsement of public transit
 - routes
 - frequent buses
 - transportation options around and to places outside Waterloo Region
- Public transit and non-private/non-car transportation as a life style choice
- Better cycling and pedestrian infrastructure (safe, friendly, healthy and useful).

Values and principles

Taking a lesson from TRIP, which has a set of values and principles that the program is based upon³, another topic for brainstorming was the values and principles relevant to any program, support or initiative that might be put in place. As with the objectives, the ideas did not receive any additional discussion or prioritization and are presented here for reference. However, during discussions in the remaining meetings, program principles were raised several times. The primary concerns centred around respect for patrons. People emphasized that programs should be fair, non-stigmatizing and ensure accessibility – all principles that were mentioned in the brainstorming sessions. Secondary concerns centred around other aspects of any program such as their sustainability, effectiveness and accountability, all of which were also mentioned.

In addition, principles relevant to program development were mentioned in subsequent meetings. Particularly important were comments that emphasized a direct focus on people with low incomes – a comment raised over and over again in discussions.

Brainstorming results: Principles for programs

Programs should:

- be honour-based
- be non stigmatizing and confidential
- maintain dignity and respect
- be fair and ensure fair access
- ensure accessibility (including everything from curb cut-outs to affordability, which are all components of accessibility)
- strengthen community, be collaborative
- be sustainable
- be efficient and have effective designs and administration
- be accountable

³ See *TRIP Operating Principles and Procedures*.

As an example, some of the suggested options could improve affordability and accessibility for people with low incomes by improving affordability and accessibility for *all* transit patrons, such as freezing or decreasing public transit fares. While this would benefit people with low incomes, the preference was to select options that could provide more direct benefits. In addition, there was recognition that new efforts should build on the good work, programs and efforts currently in play and should make use of current expertise rather than starting from scratch.

Brainstorming results: Principles for program development and administration

- Focus on people with low incomes
- Add to the good things that are already being done
- Make use of our expertise and experience, especially through partnerships that make use of these in effective and creative ways
- Encourage user participation, including testing and validating principles and values
- Consider a continuum of options (all forms of public transit and transportation) and their integration and appropriateness
- Punitive programs (such as tax levies – even for car users) would be contrary to preferred principles
- Continuously build on new information and discussions

Experiences and challenges shared by participants

During the meetings many participants shared their experiences and challenges to describe or put a face on the issues and concerns relevant to the discussion. These were helpful in trying to grasp an understanding of the situations that both users and providers face in coping with the challenges characteristic of constrained circumstances.

Brainstorming results: Situations users face

- There are lots of eligibility criteria and other factors relevant to the various programs that make them difficult to understand. There is lots of complexity involved in completing forms, etc.
- Many people face micro and macro barriers
- Options other than public transit are too expensive
- There is frequently a lag time between request for support and a response
- People have to beg for a bus ticket or have to go from place to place to get a ticket
- People are still not getting to where they need to be
- People in rural communities (especially the elderly on low incomes) have few transportation options other than cars
- Physical barriers to self/active transportation remain a challenge for many
- Many people need transportation to get to volunteer placements
- Some Regional services present challenges such as the difficulty of getting from Cambridge to KW and rural transportation
- Many seniors don't like transit. They feel intimidated, get jostled by other patrons, are uncomfortable with the noise level and sometimes people do not give up seats
- Many struggle to carry groceries picked up at the food bank, even when riding the bus, so they end up getting a taxi. Some wonder why people need a food bank, if they can afford a taxi, but they don't understand there are no other options

Brainstorming results: Situations providers face

- Budgets are being cut down
- We run out of tickets fast – they are used-up by mid month
- Waiting lists are long
- There is a heavy and acute administrative load: more time is spent administrating a wait list, than helping people access the program
- There seem to be lots of duplications
- We are frequently engaged in difficult and ugly conversations: Do you *really* need a bus ticket and why? Having to say no is difficult.
- Consider the vast amount of toonies that staff hand out to people that are desperate.
- There are challenges with medical transfers, e.g. getting patients to Guelph for testing when quick access may be required. There is a small budget for vouchers, which can be challenging
- There are many challenges in rural areas. Providing for a taxi is very expensive (\$100 for a trip to the city). Occasionally feel compelled to even use own vehicles to move people.
- There are so many unique circumstances or situations, but we don't have programs that support those unique needs
- It's difficult for fares to be subsidized through the operating budget.
- GRT has seen ridership growth – but transit operating costs present real challenges, as does servicing underutilized routes that some people depend on.
- GRT has 55% recovery goal. Currently it is 35%.
- Some areas where transit is needed may not generate sufficient ridership to achieve sustainable financial performance.

Assets, tensions and questions

A variety of other points were raised or expressed in the brainstorming sessions and other discussion. These are sorted into a few final categories relevant to considering affordable transportation and the issues involved in selecting and developing viable ways to increase accessible options. Assets are starting points from which we can build. Tensions are challenges that must be addressed; trade-offs that make easy solutions difficult to find. Tensions might also – to reflect an oft quoted sentiment – provide some opportunity for resolving challenges in creative ways to generate new options. Questions and other observations are points that were raised that seemed worthy of documentation.

Brainstorming results: Assets

- Our culture of collaboration
- TRIP
- Expertise and experience
- Willingness and commitment

Brainstorming results: Existing tensions

- revenue from ridership vs. subsidization of fares
- standard eligibility criteria vs. unique situations and circumstances
- immediate need vs. lag in response time and waiting lists
- needs vs. resources
- volunteerism vs. the challenges around volunteerism
- focusing efforts on increasing service and ridership vs. focusing efforts on affordability for core group of users.
- focusing efforts toward concerns related to economic security vs. concerns about alternative transportation/transit and people with low incomes
- collaboration vs. the cost of and skills for collaboration
- rural clients (a real need) vs. urban clients (the majority of core riders)
- routes that are desperately needed vs. routes that are under-utilized
- administrative requirements vs. costs of administration
- transit reductions and transit/transportation improvements that serve the general public vs. reductions and improvement that serve specific interest groups

Brainstorming results: some noteworthy questions and considerations

- How DO people get around? Build on what is within their grasp. (Provide services now that they are likely to use and can afford.)
- How do we get more people on the bus and still facilitate service to those with lower incomes?
- Consider models of how people are living in our community: What are the situations people face? How far are groceries, health services, other services, etc.?
- Affordability is associated with the question: How can it be practical and accessible?
- Consider strategies that provide a continuum of options, especially systemic solutions.
- How do we change the system rather than provide only band-aids?
- Is transportation a right?
- Consider options that should be endorsed vs. those that should be a focus.
- Are people with low incomes missing out on Regional programs designed for their benefit because they cannot afford transportation to access them?

Brainstorming results: other observations and information

- It is good to see transportation becoming recognized as an essential need, alongside food and housing
- GRT is one of the lowest cost services per capita. Our system is well designed!
- The costs and job benefits of public transit outweigh those of road infrastructure
- Taxes do influence behaviour (noted as results from research done elsewhere)
- Youth, some residents, newcomers and the recently-unemployed may not like using, or know much (if anything) about public transit
- Administration is inevitable and does cost
- The “Low Income Cut-Off” (LICO) is not the best measure or criteria for determining need
- Common ‘bell times’ present challenges (i.e. all the kids get off school at the same time)
- There is a deficit of sidewalks and there are many physical barriers to walking
- The way we do business has an influence on options, e.g. degree of flex allowed for people to arrive at work late in order to match bus schedules

SECTION 2: PRIORITY OPTIONS FOR INCREASING ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE TRANSPORTATION

Brainstorming and discussion identified a range of ideas and suggestions for increasing access to affordable transportation options for people with low incomes in the Region of Waterloo. Through small-group discussion, nominal group technique and evaluation exercises, these were repeatedly narrowed down to a short list of preferred options considered to be top priorities.

The following table lists these options, noting the results of the rough evaluation performed in the final meeting. Criteria are listed by importance. Benefit to people with low incomes was considered to be most important, sustainability, second-most important, etc.

Evaluations were rough assessments according to the noted criteria. They were performed by people familiar with transportation and/or the

challenges faced by people with low incomes. They did not involve any analysis of financial costs or social impacts. It is expected that such analyses would be required to arrive at a more exacting and comprehensive comparison among the prioritized options.

Most evaluation responses were strongly clustered, for example, all responses for a certain option being in the ‘high’ category. In only two cases, as noted in the table, were the evaluations spread across a wide range. (See Appendix 3 for description of the process and Appendix 4 for specific results of the evaluation.)

In the following text, options are described and discussed in more detail in the order presented in the table. A few other considerations are presented first.

Evaluation of priority options				
	Benefit to people with low incomes	Sustainability	Cost	Supportive of principles
Top priority options				
Provide free bus passes to recipients of OW, ODSP and subsidized housing	High	Medium-High	Medium-High	High
Make GRT bus passes transferrable	Medium	Medium-High	Medium-High	Medium-High
Leverage GRT day pass	Medium	Medium-High (spread)	Low-Medium	Medium-High
Top priority options that provide a means to increase affordable transportation				
Leverage upcoming “smart card”	Medium-High	Medium	High	Medium-High
Leverage different levels of government for resources	Medium-High	Medium (spread)	Low-Medium	High
Align/develop resources, partnerships, expertise, administration	Medium	Medium	Medium-High	Medium
A ‘special mention’ option				
Remove transit user fees (for people with low incomes)	High	Low-Medium	High	High

A few notes on the implications of implementation

There is recognition that changes to bus passes and tickets have implications beyond the immediate introduction of new pass or fare types. A few particular issues have been noted:

- Current limitations on the number of bus pass/fare types that can be handled: Bus drivers already have to keep in mind a complicated variety of fare and pass-types, making the creation of any more types something of a concern. Additionally, the devices for tracking use of different fares and passes have 12 keys – all of which are allocated to different fares/passes – so are limited in their capacity to gather information. Introduction of the “smart card” (see below) will reduce these barriers.
- Changes to passes and tickets have implications for revenue and ridership: Introducing a new pass will alter purchases of other passes, tickets and/or cash fares. It may also lead to changes in the frequency, timing and location of ridership. These implications are seldom straightforward. For example, introducing transferrable passes may increase the sale of bus passes (because they seem more attractive to more people) and/or decrease the sale of passes (because people may purchase one pass instead of two). It may also increase and/or decrease cash fares (because people with a transferrable pass may cover overlaps with cash fares and because people who previously used cash fares now share a pass). Where

possible it would be advantageous to implement pilot programs to assess usefulness and implications of changes or additions.

- Transit over other forms of transportation: As noted above, transit is a financially-less-costly option than some other forms of transportation, most particularly, using a car. While there are limitations on routes and scheduling that make some places difficult or impossible to get to, it has been a key focus because of its affordability and because there is already a Regional system in place.
- Other tensions: In section one a number of tensions or trade-offs were noted that may be relevant to some of the options and challenges involved in their implementation. For example, current concerns over economic stability and security will present hard choices for determining allocation of monies to any programs or options that might be recommended for increasing access to affordable transportation. Collaboration may be an effective way to minimize the use of resources required for developing and managing some programs; however, collaboration itself has a cost. Creative ways for overcoming these and other tensions may provide opportunities that could facilitate or generate affordable transportation options; however, they also present considerable challenge that need to be acknowledged or addressed.

Top priority options that should be a focus for increasing access to affordable transportation

The consultation process led to the identification of the following options as those that should be a focus. This is not to suggest that these are the only options that might benefit people with low incomes, but rather that these three also have the potential benefits of sustainability and relatively low cost and are supportive of the sort of principles that might best be associated with such programs.

Provide a free GRT bus pass to people on OW, ODSP and to those in subsidized housing

Among those that receive income or housing support from the Region, many also receive support for transportation – through a variety of different Provincial, Regional and Regionally-supported programs. If all people receiving such support were to automatically receive a bus pass, this would be of obvious benefit to those with low incomes and could also simplify the administrative processes for patrons and providers.

Anecdotes and consultations confirm that having a bus pass provides an element of freedom to patrons that is vastly preferred over bus tickets. While patrons have also expressed challenges due to service and scheduling limitations, bus passes enable access to services, community and amenities that may be inaccessible otherwise. Passes provide access to transportation that is only limited by service/scheduling and is not subject to the scrimping and begging experienced when trying to obtain free tickets from service providers. This is why this option is seen to be highly supportive of principles – it provides an amount of autonomy to patrons.

This option is also seen to be supportive of program principles such as simplicity, efficiency, and effectiveness because many administrative and management procedures are already in place. In particular, there would be no need for a special or additional application or vetting process, such as exists with TRIP and – on an ad hoc basis – in the many conversations held between, for example, outreach workers and clients over whether or not this particular person can receive a free ticket at this particular time.

These factors are also relevant with respect to sustainability and cost. Currently, many people that would be covered by this option already receive transportation assistance from the Region and/or the Province. In addition, there is an administrative infrastructure in place to handle the application and approval of OW, ODSP and subsidized housing recipients, which can be expected to remain in place for the foreseeable future.

With respect to the implications for GRT ridership, it is expected that most of these patrons would be riding the bus at off-peak times when busses are not crowded, so the impact may be negligible.

Finally, if this option was implemented with minimal changes to TRIP, it would free-up TRIP passes for distribution to working people with low incomes. (60% of TRIP passes go to people on social assistance.)

evaluation

- Benefit to people with low incomes: High
- Sustainability: Medium-High
- Cost: Medium-High
- Supportive of principles: High

Make the GRT bus passes transferrable

Currently, bus passes can only be used by a single person and cannot be shared with others. Transferrable passes – which might be shared among members of a household or might be shared more broadly – would definitely benefit some people with low incomes. For example, members of a household who need to travel to activities or appointments on different days would be able to share a pass rather than buy multiple passes. If one member of a household purchases a pass to travel to/from work, other members of the household could use the same pass during non-work-time activities.

Such a pass would definitely be beneficial; however, they can still be used by only one person at a time, hence the evaluation of this option as moderately beneficial. A transferrable pass would likely have to be

augmented by the purchase of tickets or payment of cash fares to cover the time when it cannot be shared.

Options include having all bus passes transferrable or only specific passes, such as TRIP passes or special passes for people with low incomes, transferrable. As noted above, introducing a new type of pass presents some difficulties. These could be allayed if all passes of a particular type (e.g. seniors, students, TRIP) are transferrable.

Currently, passes are linked to photo identification – a factor that would not necessarily be required for transferrable passes. If only specific types of passes – for example, TRIP passes – were transferrable and had no photo identification, this would make them identifiably different, which has implications for patron confidentiality.

Transferrable passes would also be beneficial to agencies working with people with low incomes. For example, there is a program in Victoria, BC that is managed in much the same way as the bus-ticket program here. Not-for-profit organizations/agencies can purchase passes at a discount that are loaned out to patrons for travel to job interviews, medical appointments, volunteer opportunities, etc.

If agencies and organizations were allowed to purchase transferrable passes, these could be identified with the agency name/logo and used in much the same way a regular pass is used. It would be the agency's responsibility to manage use of the pass, including recognition of the risk that passes may be lost or not returned. Despite such risks, such passes are seen as beneficial. Although not eliminating the need for the disbursement of bus tickets, they are seen as a way of getting away from at least some of the difficult conversations around whether or not a particular client really needs a bus ticket. Bus drivers would know that passes with agency identification are being used at the discretion of the agency.

GRT currently has a pilot program in a suburban neighbourhood with relatively new transit service in which passes are transferrable among persons living in a household. The neighbourhood was chosen to encourage a change in the established transportation modes of the area. The pilot is scheduled to end by Christmas and will hopefully provide insights relevant to this option such as whether such passes are likely to increase or decrease pass sales and/or transit ridership.

evaluation

- Benefit to people with low incomes: Medium
- Sustainability: Medium-High
- Cost: Medium-High
- Supportive of principles: Medium-High

Leverage the GRT day pass

The GRT has a day pass that costs the equivalent of two adult cash fares. This pass is valid all day, any day for a single person. The same pass can be used as a Sunday/Holiday family pass, valid on Sunday or holidays for 2 adults and 3 children or 1 adult and 4 children. These passes can only be purchased at a few locations. The day pass could be quite helpful to people with low incomes since it provides unlimited access to public transit for a day for the price of a return adult fare. It also has obvious benefits as a family pass.

There are several ways in which these passes might be applied to increase access to affordable transportation.

First is to increase awareness of its availability – perhaps through a marketing campaign targeted toward those who would benefit from its use. Their use would be enhanced by increasing the number of locations at which day passes can be purchased, making them more accessible, especially in locations frequented by people with low incomes.

Expanding its use as a Sunday/holiday family pass would also be beneficial. For example, one participant noted that public transit schedules are quite limited on Sundays in some areas: “A Sunday pass is not all that helpful.” Extending the family pass to include Saturday – or (even better) any day of the week – would be beneficial. Many families are restricted in their ability to do family outings because of transportation costs.

Another option would be to make these passes available through the discount ticket program so that agencies could purchase them at a discount and then provide them to patrons in need of transportation. Again, this has the benefit of providing someone with transit for the day at the price of two fares (although more than two tickets). Making

these passes available to outreach workers, then, may also benefit people with low incomes.

One of the advantages noted for bus passes over bus tickets is the sense of freedom that is gained from knowing that it is possible to travel whenever/wherever schedules and routes allow. While day passes are obviously of far less benefit, they still provide a small sense freedom one day at a time...

Options that provide a means to increase access to affordable transportation

The following options were also identified as priority considerations. They are, however, seen as means to achieve ends rather than as ends in themselves.

Leverage the upcoming GRT 'smart card'

The 'smart card' is a type of 'electronic purse' that can be loaded with money to pay for different types of fares. As a patron boards the bus and swipes their card, their fare is deducted from the total amount available on their card. Such a card has many advantages and will provide greater flexibility regarding fare and pass options. Bringing such a card into use is in the GRT business plan, with an approximate timeframe of 2012/2013.

While the smart card will not be able to deal with *all* of the challenges that have been identified in considering new passes, it will go a long way to making implementation easier since a greater diversity of pass-types will be possible. Another key benefit is that the card removes concerns around confidentiality since it will not be possible to identify the pass as different when it is used by a patron to pay their fare.

The cost for implementing the smart card is high, with only a minimal amount already budgeted. However, use of the smart card to facilitate implementation of new passes to increase affordability for people with low incomes may carry minimal additional costs and might be reasonably sustainable once the smart card program is in place.

Use of the smart card would decrease costs associated with implementing any of the suggested changes to passes such as a

evaluation

- Benefit to people with low incomes: Medium
- Sustainability: Medium-High (spread)
- Cost: Low-Medium
- Supportive of principles: Medium-High

transferrable pass or free passes for people in receipt of OW/ODSP and housing assistance. It may also have other advantages, for example, in the case of a card that is not returned to an agency that has loaned it to a client, it could be 'turned off' disabling its use.

evaluation

- Benefit to people with low incomes: Medium-High
- Sustainability: Medium
- Cost: High
- Support of principles: Medium-High

Leverage different levels of government for resources

One of the most common concerns mentioned in discussions is that there is not enough funding/resources to cover the needs of people with low incomes living in the Region. For example, as noted in the introduction, the TRIP pass is valued by those who are in the program, but there is constantly a waiting list – and the program is not broadly advertised, which suggests the waiting list could be longer. Appeals to different levels of government for additional support may be a way to increase funds/resources, especially if consideration is given to the relevant policies that exist at the different levels and how they might be capitalized upon.

In some cases, collaboration with others may be helpful. For example, partnering with other municipalities to lobby the Provincial government for additional funding support beyond what is currently provided through OW, ODSP or for employment support, for example.

evaluation

- Benefit to people with low incomes: Medium-High
- Sustainability: Medium (spread)
- Cost: Low-Medium
- Supportive of principles: High

Align resources, develop partnerships, draw on expertise & streamline administration/management (for patron and provider)

This option covers a range of possibilities that are centered around partnership and collaboration. TRIP is a good example of effective collaboration directed toward affordable transportation. Each partner contributes in a way that draws on their expertise. The application process is handled by The Working Centre and Lutherwood who have expertise and infrastructure for working directly with people with low incomes. Marketing and ticket sales are handled by the GRT, use projections by Transportation Planning, and administration by Social Services – each of these roles matching the partners’ capacity. In

comparing this program to a few others that exist, the program design and success are due to the partnerships.

As noted above, many programs carry substantial administrative burdens – although these administrative costs are often hidden and difficult to calculate. In similar ways, aligning resources in ways to benefit people with low incomes has potential for increasing options without increasing costs to any great degree. Car-pooling and fleet-sharing are simple and obvious options. Other ideas are also listed in the following section. Efforts to streamline processes (for both patron and provider) and to develop complementary partnerships (e.g. around shared resources) would be advantageous.

evaluation

- Benefit to people with low incomes: Medium
- Sustainability: Medium
- Cost: Medium-High
- Supportive of principles: Medium

Ideas to endorse

Among the ideas suggested in brainstorming sessions and further discussions were many that – while good and potentially beneficial to people with low incomes – would also make transportation more accessible and affordable for others. Investment in such options would be worthwhile, but since they would not be directly benefitting people with low incomes, they were considered unsuitable as priority options for this initiative. Nonetheless, they were considered to be options with merit and therefore options to encourage and endorse.

The options are listed in order of rough priority.

Endorse/prioritize development of active transportation infrastructure and multi-modal transportation nodes

Active transportation refers to people-powered transportation such as walking and cycling. It is one of the least financially costly forms of

transportation, although it does have other costs – primarily time and discomfort, especially in the middle of the winter. On the plus side, it can have potential health benefits. Efforts to develop and/or improve active transportation infrastructure such as sidewalks, cycling lanes and bike paths would increase affordable transportation options.

It has been noted that the R/C ratio (revenue/cost ratio) – a performance metric for transit systems – is frequently discussed; however, a comparable metric for road infrastructure does not exist. It is easy to see what is being spent on transit; however road/parking subsidies are hidden across many levels of government.

Related to active transportation infrastructure is ensuring that there are smooth linkages among different modes of transportation – multi-modal transportation nodes. Bike parking/storage and car share parking at transit terminals are good examples. Easy connections

increase transfer options. Promoting multi-modal transportation nodes as a planning guideline – especially with regards to rapid transit development – would benefit all and would aid in increasing affordable transportation options.

While this option has benefit for the population at large, including people with low incomes – the latter are likely to be disproportionately represented among those using active transportation and public transit. In consequence, they may disproportionately receive most of the benefit.

Identify areas/neighbourhoods frequented/used by people with low incomes and prioritize them for transportation-related improvements, including public transit

Related to the preceding option, this one presents a shift in focus from the *mode* of transportation to its *location* and has more direct implications for people with low incomes. By identifying neighbourhoods with many low income residents, transportation related improvements could be prioritized in a manner that would benefit those most needing of the assistance. Such improvements should cover a range of transportation options including public transit and others. Suggestions include:

- ensure there are good sidewalks, bike paths, etc. to encourage/support active transportation
- consider corridor support/development
- consider/ensure good access to food stores, employment, other amenities
- prioritize spending in these areas
- consider availability of public transit and of ticket strips, day passes, etc.

Support/encourage/facilitate car-pooling

Public transit is a less expensive mode of transportation; however, there can be challenges to accessibility and availability that make it difficult in some situations for some people. Car-pooling can provide a less expensive alternative. Especially effective for regular commuting, notably to/from work and to/from regular children's

activities such as soccer, it would be helpful to encourage for less-regular trips also. An important tool for facilitating car-pooling is the *Car-pool Zone* website (<http://www.carpoolzone.smartcommute.ca/>) where people can sign up to ask-for and/or offer rides. It is possible to register as an individual or to register as an employer/place of employment, making it easy for potential car-poolers to find matches. Car-pooling is a more effective alternative the more participants there are to draw from. A similar website in BC also enables matching of one-time trips.

Encouraging employers to promote car-pooling within their businesses/organizations – either using the CarPoolZone or a system developed and applied 'in-house' – would be beneficial. This would be especially helpful for employees that do not earn a living wage as well as those in hard-to-reach locations.

Ways to facilitate car-pooling with cars from Grand River Car Share might enable groups of people that cannot afford a car to reach locations inaccessible by other means of transportation.

Form/support partnerships around resources and administration

As noted elsewhere in this report, lack of resources is frequently a barrier for agencies/organizations working to support people with low incomes. Additionally, administration of programs and specialized attention can require substantial amounts of time and effort. Developing ways to partner around these challenges in complimentary ways would ultimately benefit low income patrons/clients. Collaborating and sharing program management/administration could preclude the need for new/additional administration infrastructure or development of new/additional evaluative or service-delivery mechanisms. As mentioned previously, TRIP is a good example of this kind of partnership.

In other cases, it may be possible and more effective to match resources. For example a program/organization that owns a bus, but cannot fully utilize it due to lack of funding for a full-time driver and licensing/insurance requirements could present an opportunity for corporate volunteerism. There may also be an opportunity for cost-

sharing of the bus ownership and maintenance with another organization that requires a bus at non-conflicting times.

Integrate Grand River Car Share (GRCS) corporate membership and GRT corporate passes

Both Grand River Car Share and Grand River Transit offer corporate memberships that provide discounts on regular use. When combined, such memberships could provide a useful and reasonably affordable transportation package. Exploring how such a package might be provided for or targeted toward people with low incomes could be worthwhile. Suggested ideas include:

- make these available to not-for-profits (perhaps to patrons/clients as well as staff) and workplaces
- consider joint advertising/marketing of GRCS/GRT, especially among not-for-profits
- consider how these might benefit people with low incomes, especially with a reduced corporate pass, for example
- consider advent of smart card and potential for the card to cover both transit and car-share users

Form/support partnerships around education/awareness of transit options

Given that cars are the dominant form of transportation in the Region, many people are unfamiliar with using public transit, which can be considerably less expensive. Increasing awareness of public transit coupled with education on its use could be helpful for those people with low incomes who struggle to maintain a car when this alternative would meet their needs. People that could benefit include those who are new to the Region (including new Canadians), those who can no longer afford to keep a car and those who have lost their driver's license (e.g. seniors, others) or who have not obtained one yet (e.g.

teens). The latter group may be particularly important as most transportation behaviours are 'locked in' during the teenage years. Currently, life tends to revolve around getting your license and then getting a car. Public transit, as a more inexpensive and environmentally sustainable option needs to be encouraged early on. Other potential beneficiaries include employers/employees, where a common understanding may help overcome some challenges, such as promoting start times that coincide with transit schedules.

Creating and supporting partnerships to develop and deliver educational programs are seen as especially beneficial. (See below for another option emphasizing education/awareness of public transit as well as other transportation alternatives with more suggestions on content.)

As an example, the GRT has been working on development of material to introduce newcomers to the transit system. Resources such as this could be developed and used in partnership with other organizations that work with people with low incomes, which may help in the creation of effective material and its broader presentation. For example, the GRT has expertise and capacity for the design of educational/instructional tools and workshops that could be developed in collaboration with and for the use of other agencies such as:

- Multicultural Centre, Newcomer portal, New Canadian program
- Universities, colleges, schools, especially those teaching ESL; Earth Day as possible link to school education
- doctor's offices, health centres, seniors centres
- employment centres
- BIAs, Communitech, Chambers
- lower-wage employers, e.g. service sector, retail

Special mention

There is a final idea that some participants felt deserved special mention – despite recognition that it is likely not implementable and despite recognition that it has been raised and put aside in the past. It was felt that there may be variations worth considering.

Remove user fee for public transit – for people with low incomes

Some felt strongly that free transit should be included as a priority option – others felt strongly that this suggestion has been made and investigated before and that it should be kept at rest. There was, however, agreement that this option would be very beneficial for people with low incomes. Consensus was to give the option special mention – and to focus it on people with low incomes. All realized that in an ideal world, this would be a good option, with the obvious benefit to people with low incomes of having access to transportation with no financial cost and obvious environmental benefits as well. However, there are also obvious financial and other costs to running public transit without user fees that make this option prohibitively expensive.

Two lesser variations on the option, then, are recommended:

- free transit for people with low incomes
- freeze transit fares

A few considerations were raised in discussion. In particular, the question: What are the appropriate shares of financial allocations to different forms of transportation – car, active transportation, public transit? It is felt that infrastructure targeted toward the car receives the bulk of financial expenditure.

In addition, the tension between maintaining and expanding an effective public transit system and reducing transit fares must be recognized.

(More discussion and examples relevant to this option can be found in *Investigating Affordable Transportation Options*.)

evaluation

- Benefit to people with low incomes: High
- Sustainability: Low-Medium
- Cost: High
- Supportive of principles: High

PREFERRED BUT NOT PRIORITY IDEAS

The following ideas were identified as preferable, but did not make it onto the above lists of top priority options. They are included to make the record complete; to ensure that good ideas are not lost so that further work or discussion may have a broader starting point.

These are listed with (roughly speaking) the more preferable ideas first, according to prioritization in the last meeting and discussion in earlier meetings.

Ideas related specifically to public transit

Provide further incentives/discounts for people who buy bus passes

People who purchase bus passes and use them regularly receive a discount off of the regular cash fare. Consideration could be given to further discounts for pre-paid passes such as buying passes for a year and getting one month free or four months for a discount. The key concern with respect to affordability is that most people with low incomes would not be able to purchase passes in this way because they would involve a high initial outlay. This concern might be addressed by having a lay-away plan for transit passes or a transportation bank for people with low incomes.

Focus on low-income neighbourhoods for ticket/pass availability

In addition to bus passes, bus tickets also provide a discount off of a regular cash fare. Making tickets, including day passes, more readily available for people with low incomes would increase affordability in a small way. This could include:

- increase availability of ticket strips and day passes in areas/neighbourhoods frequented by people with low incomes and in areas/locations with subsidized housing
- increase their availability at transportation nodes (e.g. at VIA rail station) and integrate such availability with multi-modal planning

Develop short term passes

Short-term, such as one week passes would be helpful for people in some circumstances. Some other communities also have week-day monthly passes, which are valid Monday-Friday only and are somewhat less expensive than a regular monthly pass. (See *Investigating Affordable Transportation Options in the Region of Waterloo with a Focus on Public Transit*⁴.)

Expand Mobility Plus

Expanding the eligibility criteria for Mobility Plus in winter when mobility becomes more of a challenge would be of considerable benefit to seniors and others with mobility challenges, many of whom live on limited income.

Expand corporate pass

The corporate pass provides a 15% discount on regular passes. A minimum number of employees is required to register for the program. The pass is administered by the business/organization, typically through employee payroll deduction. A number of ideas were mentioned as possible options to help increase affordable transportation:

- Encourage enrolment in the program by organizations that could benefit their low income workers by offering the passes (e.g. those that pay low wages to their workers); consider lowering minimum requirements in these circumstances
- Consider allowing organizations to register their employees as well as their low income patrons/clients
- Consider allowing a range of different groups or organizations to register people, such as neighbourhood associations to register residents. (See option below.)
- Make the corporate pass available to Grand River Car Share members

⁴ Report is available at http://civics.ca/docs/afftrans_investigate.pdf

- Enable corporate pass purchase by smaller organizations/businesses through CTT, Communitech, BIAs, Chambers
- Make corporate passes available at the extra reduced rate (a deeper discount) for specific agencies such as not-for-profits
- Link TRIP to the corporate pass so that TRIP patrons receive a corporate pass

Neighbourhood/community pass

Boulder, Colorado has an innovative neighbourhood pass that is perhaps most easily described as a U-pass for neighbourhood residents. (See description in *Investigating Affordable Transportation Options*.) Opportunities for developing a similar pass in Waterloo Region could be directed toward the benefit of people with low incomes.

Ideas related to transit and other forms of transportation

Increase education/awareness of transit and other forms of transportation

The benefits of increase education and awareness-building around public transit were noted above. These benefits are also relevant to other forms of alternative transportation, including cycling and walking.

To be most effective as a tool for increasing affordable transportation, educational and learning approaches would have to be focused specifically on people with low incomes. Outreach through partnerships with relevant agencies and organizations may be especially helpful in this regard. (See above.) In some cases, one-on-one contact may be best as many newcomers do not have access to the internet and language may be a barrier to understanding. Another approach would be to develop a series of how-to videos, which could be available to agencies and organizations as well as on the internet.

With regards to transit, a number of factors were suggested as educational content:

- the various types of fares and bus passes
- where to purchase tickets, including where to get free/reduced tickets/passes
- how to find/identify bus stops and how to get on/off bus
- bus-rider etiquette such as respect for seniors (which has the added benefit of making buses more comfortable for seniors and others)
- an awareness that bus drivers are here to help
- the environmental benefits, such as the lower impacts of taking a bus rather than a car

Increase marketing and advertising related to transit

In concert with the foregoing option, increased marketing and advertising of public transit among people with low incomes as well as those who work with people that have low incomes could be beneficial. While driving a car has advantages, riding the bus also has advantages, including a lesser cost (as long as it provides scheduling and service appropriate to a patron's needs). Several marketing ideas were put forward:

- increase awareness of the value associated with the safety and sustainability of public transit in comparison to cars
- increase awareness of the (e.g. annual) cost of public transit versus car
- increase awareness among employers about the advantages of public transit (e.g. that it is always available)
- provide incentives for people to ride the bus, especially to buy passes
- target brochures to specific groups e.g. children, seniors
- represent more groups in advertising pictures

Consider ways to pool and jointly-allocate existing funding

As noted in the introduction and in the companion report *Investigating Affordable Transportation*, there are many programs that provide differing kinds of support. While this variety is a beneficial way to meet a diversity of needs, there is also a question as to what, strategically, would be most effective. A detailed assessment of the

funds that are dispersed and/or available across the region would enable strategic consideration of the most effective allocation of these resources.

This might be most effective if promoted/implemented hand-in-hand with the development of partnerships (see below) and in consideration of resources available from other levels of government (see above).

Promote corporate volunteerism, especially regarding drivers

Obtaining drivers is increasingly difficult for not-for-profit organizations that have buses and other vehicles due to a greater need for particular qualifications, insurance coverage, etc. GRT drivers, volunteering as part of their job may benefit such organizations and their patrons and would be a way for the Region to support transportation needs of people with low incomes. For example, the cost of one extra driver per year to the Region could provide many volunteer-driver-days for not-for-profit organizations providing services to people with low incomes. Volunteer drivers would not necessarily be required for the full day and/or at rush hours, so shift integration/overlap may be an option (e.g. drivers volunteer during GRT-non-rush hours).

Another option is to consider volunteer drivers using car-share cars under a corporate membership.

Ensure secure, affordable, accessible bike parking

Secure and accessible bike parking is not readily available in many areas and locations across Waterloo Region. Since cycling is a relatively affordable form of transportation, ensuring that safe and secure parking for bicycles is readily accessible and affordable would be beneficial. It would be especially helpful to increase bike parking for tenants with low incomes and at workplaces and agencies that are frequented by people with low incomes.

Secure, accessible, affordable bike parking could be promoted as a planning guideline and would be enhanced if there were consequences for moving bike-parking that makes it more inaccessible (e.g. moving it from the front to the back of a building).

Increase funding from other sources

As noted above, there always seem to be insufficient funds to cover needs. Research into funding opportunities from Federal and Provincial governments and from other funding organizations may be worthwhile. This may be especially helpful with regards to funding opportunities for specific programs, such as the Legion funding programs for veterans.

Expand and support Grand River Car Share (GRCS) transportation bank

The GRCS transportation bank enables people with lower incomes to pay the initial membership fee required to join the co-operative over an extended period. Additional financial investment would increase the number of people who can access this option, which is limited by the amount available in the 'bank'. Consideration could also be given to covering membership fees in whole or in part, since even paying the fee back over time may be a barrier to some people with low incomes.

Expand Grand River Car Share (GRCS) into rural areas

Currently, GRCS has cars in Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge. Expansion to rural areas has been considered, but a minimum number of cars and people in close proximity are required to make car sharing successful. Rural areas are less likely to support these numbers, so such expansion has not occurred. Ways in which this expansion might be supported could be beneficial for people with low incomes living or working in rural areas. For example, simultaneous expansion of transit and car-sharing to rural areas may make such options more feasible – especially if increased attention is given to multi-modal nodes.

Develop service partnerships, especially between GRT and others

Service partnerships – either to incorporate more services on board buses (such as food bank drop off) or to allow an exchange of services (such as library book returns in exchange for sale of tickets at libraries) could be beneficial.

CLOSING COMMENT

The consultations reported on in this document provided a range and diversity of ideas for increasing access to affordable transportation for people with low incomes. Some would require substantial cost to implement, others would require much less; some would require strong partnerships and collaboration, others would require less. Sifting through these ideas, the consultation process led to the identification of a few promising ideas as the top priorities for the Region to consider implementing as well as a few others to endorse. These priority options were seen to be those that could provide the greatest benefit to people with low incomes as well as having a greater potential to be sustainable, incur lower costs and support key principles. These options will require more focused research and consideration to determine appropriate steps for implementation and may benefit from pilots or trials to understand their benefits and implications.

In addition to the priorities, there are many other options that could be implemented by the Region, by other organizations and/or by partnerships among the Region and other organizations.

Finally, there are many other ideas and related discussions presented in the report that provide a context for understanding some of the key opportunities and concerns relevant to transportation affordability.

The intention behind this work is to move from ideas to the implementation of new programs and other types of support that will benefit people with low incomes. It is hoped that the ideas and information presented here will aid in this task and will help to ensure that relevant and important considerations are involved in their design, development and implementation.

APPENDIX 1: PARTICIPANT LISTS

March 24, 2009, 150 Main Street, Cambridge

Nina Bailey-Dick, Social Services, RoW; Gethyn Beniston, Planner, Transportation Planning, RoW; John Cicuttin, Manager, Transit Development, Transportation Planning, RoW; Kris Cummings, Director of Community Investment, United Way – Cambridge; Beth Dempster, Civics Research Cooperative; David Dirks, Director, Employment and Income Support, Social Services, RoW; Julie Doherty, City of Kitchener; John Hill, TDM Planner, Transportation Planning, RoW; Mary MacKeigan, Executive Director, Opportunities Waterloo Region; Janet MacLeod, Grand River Car Share; Stephanie Mancini, The Working Centre; Jane Mitchell, Council Member, Regional Council, RoW; Sandy Roberts, Manager, Marketing & Communications, Grand River Transit, RoW; Trisha Robinson, Executive Director, Wilmot Family Resource Centre; Paula Sawicki, Manager, Strategic Transportation Planning, Transportation Planning, RoW; Daniela Seska-Hencic, Public Health, RoW; Jason Spencer, The Working Centre; Lindsey Trotechaud, Langs Farm Village Association

Facilitators/recorder: Diana Drackley and Sharon Livingstone, Drackley, Livingstone and Associates; Eric Tucs, Civics Research Cooperative

April 20, 99 Regina Street, Waterloo

June Anderson, Cambridge Self Help Food Bank; Gethyn Beniston, Planner, Transportation Planning, RoW; John Cicuttin, Manager, Transit Development, Transportation Planning, RoW; David Dirks, Director, Employment and Income Support, Social Services, RoW; Janis Doran, PATER program; Heather Froome, Social Development Programs, RoW; Jason Hammond, Grand River Car Share; Maria Hatzipantelis, Public Health, RoW; John Hill, TDM Planner, Transportation Planning, RoW; Janet MacLeod, Grand River Car

Share; Jane Mitchell, Council Member, Regional Council, RoW; Trisha Robinson, Executive Director, Wilmot Family Resource Centre; Paula Sawicki, Manager, Strategic Transportation Planning, Transportation Planning, RoW; Jason Spencer, The Working Centre

Facilitators/recorder: Beth Dempster, Civics Research Cooperative; Diana Drackley, Drackley, Livingstone and Associates; Eric Tucs, Civics Research Cooperative

June 16, 2009, 99 Regina Street, Waterloo

Gethyn Beniston, Planner, Transportation Planning, RoW; David Dirks, Director, Employment and Income Support, Social Services, RoW; Janis Doran, PATER program; John Hill, TDM Planner, Transportation Planning, RoW; Stephanie Mancini, The Working Centre; Paula Sawicki, Manager, Strategic Transportation Planning, Transportation Planning, RoW; Daniela Seska-Hencic, Public Health, RoW; Jason Spencer, The Working Centre

Facilitator/recorder: Beth Dempster, Eric Tucs, Civics Research Cooperative

Sept 24 2009, 150 Frederick Street, Kitchener

Gethyn Beniston, Planner, Transportation Planning, RoW; David Dirks, Director, Employment and Income Support, Social Services, RoW; Heather Froome, Social Development Programs, RoW; John Hill, TDM Planner, Transportation Planning, RoW; Stephanie Mancini, The Working Centre; Paula Sawicki, Manager, Strategic Transportation Planning, Transportation Planning, RoW; Daniela Seska-Hencic, Public Health, RoW; Jason Spencer, The Working Centre

APPENDIX 2: THE COMPLETE LIST OF OPTIONS AND IDEAS

The following lists include all of the ideas that were identified through brainstorming and discussion at the series of meetings that were part of this consultation. They are listed in three main categories, according to the assignment of priorities. More details or discussion on these options can be found in the text of the report.

Top priority options

These ideas were identified as the ones most likely to provide benefit to people with low incomes, with the highest potential for sustainability and lower costs.

Options to focus on

- Provide free bus passes to people on ODSP/OW and to those in subsidized housing
- Develop a shared/transferrable GRT bus pass
- Leverage day pass

Options that provide means to achieve ends rather than being an end in themselves

- Leverage upcoming ‘smart’ card
- Leverage different levels of government for resources
- Align resources, develop partnerships, draw on expertise and streamline administration/management

Options to endorse

- Endorse/prioritize development of active transportation infrastructure and develop multi-modal transportation nodes to increase transfer options
- Identify areas/neighbourhoods frequented/used by people with low incomes and prioritize them for transportation-related improvements
- Support/encourage/facilitate car-pooling
- Form/support partnerships around resources and administration

- Integrate Grand River Car Share (GRCS) corporate membership and GRT corporate passes and make these available to not-for-profits and workplaces
- Form/support partnerships around education/awareness of transit options

Special mention

Free public transit is an option that has been suggested and considered many times. While there is recognition that it is unlikely to be viable, it is an option that would provide considerable benefit to people with low incomes and so was included on the list. (See additional discussion in the text.)

- Remove user fee for public transit – at least for people with low incomes

Preferred but not priority ideas

The following ideas were selected for further consideration from among the full list, but were not chosen as top priority options.

Ideas related specifically to public transit

- Provide incentives/discounts for people who buy bus passes
- Focus on low-income neighbourhoods for ticket/pass availability
- Develop short term passes (e.g. 1 week passes)
- Expand mobility plus (especially seasonally)
- Expand corporate pass (e.g. lower requirements for not-for-profits; allow use by clients as well as staff)
- Develop neighbourhood/community pass

Ideas related to public transit and other forms of transportation

- Increase education/awareness of transit options
- Increase marketing and advertising related to transit and other forms of transportation
- Consider ways to pool and jointly-allocate existing funding

- Promote corporate volunteerism, especially regarding drivers
- Ensure secure, affordable, accessible bike parking
- Increase funding from other sources
- Expand and support Grand River Car Share (GRCS) transportation bank
- Expand GRCS into rural areas
- Develop service partnerships , especially between GRT and others

Other ideas mentioned in brainstorming and discussion

The following ideas were identified in brainstorming sessions, but were not selected for further consideration.

Ideas related specifically to public transit

- allow free boarding at food bank bus stops
- be creative regarding how tickets are given out
- develop a single reduced fare for seniors, students and people with low income
- increase accessibility for obtaining photo id
- allow elementary children to ride for free with an adult
- reduce fares for attendants
- adapt Pal card (e.g. for assistance getting groceries at food bank)
- adapt U-pass to other patrons/populations
- use TRIP funds to lower all fares instead
- use the combined allotment provided to OW, ODSP and school boards to drop all fares instead

Ideas related to other transportation options

- increase availability of taxi scripts/vouchers
- support the distribution and fitting of bikes and safety equipment
- provide free bike helmets
- allow no helmets
- provide flexible, accessible bike lockers
- develop/support a bike-share network
- increase fleet and fleet-sharing at GRCS
- support/encourage/facilitate car-pooling, especially with organizations that can't/don't pay living wage

- use school buses
- develop corridors throughout our cities for cyclists, pedestrians and public transit
- develop/support cycling-focused and pedestrian-focused planning and signage
- develop/support better bikes lanes and sidewalks
- remove barriers to public and active transportation (whatever they are)
- charge tolls for use of cars, especially downtown
- tax parking benefits
- develop corridors so that cars/buses are not a priority on all streets, for example, designate every 4th street to be for bicycles/pedestrians
- provide a continuum of options and multi-modal connectors, e.g., bicycle/pedestrian walkways with good connections to transit

Other ideas

- centralize services and resource centres to create “one-stop-shops” to make transportation easier
- move services to where people live and work
- develop service/community centers with as many programs as possible in the community and in our neighbourhoods
- continue the dialogue/conversation so that better systems can be worked out
- align resources, develop partnerships, draw on expertise
- develop efficiencies through collaboration
- streamline administration/management (for patron and provider)
- organize volume purchasing
- leverage different levels of government for resources, according to policies
- dedicated staff for low income transportation
- support informal approaches
- develop corporate, retail, and service sponsorship
- simplify and reduce applications/paper work (for patrons and providers)
- encourage/support systemic change

APPENDIX 3: CONSULTATION AND PRIORITIZATION PROCESS

To facilitate the identification, development and selection of appropriate strategies for increasing affordable transportation options, a collaborative approach was considered beneficial. After background research, the second stage of this initiative brought key people together over a series of meetings with two specific objectives:

- To develop a few good, implementable answers to the question: *How can we increase affordable transportation options for people with low incomes in the Region of Waterloo?*
- To foster collaboration and improved understanding among those working to increase affordable transportation options for people with low incomes.

The first two meetings – held March 24 and April 20, in Cambridge and Waterloo, respectively – involved roughly the same group of participants, a Regional councillor, relevant members of Regional staff and people from a range of not-for-profit agencies in Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge and the townships. (See participant list in Appendix 1.) The first meeting included an introduction to the initiative and brief report on the work to date. This was followed by a brainstorming exercise to generate a list of ideas for increasing affordable transportation options as well as other relevant ideas. Material from the first meeting was summarized and sorted by the researchers into those relevant and not-relevant to the main objective. Summaries were distributed to participants for comment and in preparation for the second meeting.

At the second meeting, material was integrated – by participants – into four focus areas for small group discussion:

- Partnerships, collaboration, administration and funding
- Active transportation, car-sharing and car-pooling
- Building on/extending fees and passes
- Education and marketing

Small group discussion enabled participants to expand upon ideas in each category, noting advantages/disadvantages, how options might

be resourced, who they would benefit, foreseeable challenges, and other factors. Preferred options were highlighted.

Material from the first two meetings was presented in an interim report that included a long list of possible options and ideas, drawing attention to the preferred options. This report was circulated to participants for comment and feedback. The report and consultation process were also discussed by the TRIP committee. There was agreement that additional consultation would be beneficial.

A third meeting was held on June 16, 2009, in Waterloo. This involved a somewhat smaller group of people, which enabled more focused and involved discussion. (See participant list in Appendix 1.) The ideas and options gathered to date were prioritized using nominal group technique where each participant is given a number of ‘votes’ to cast among options in successive rounds. This led to a final set of preferred options in two categories:

- ideas that should be a focus for increasing affordable transportation options for people with low incomes
- ideas that should be endorsed as they are only indirectly beneficial to people with low incomes

Results from this process were summarized and, again, distributed among participants for comment and feedback.

At the fourth and final meeting, held Sept 14, 2009, in Kitchener, the outcomes of the third meeting – a set of seven priority options and six options to endorse – were brought forward. Discussion and use of a “dotmocratic” approach led to the identification of three key options that seemed most beneficial and viable for increasing access to affordable transportation. (See Appendix 4.) In discussion, a few options were identified as potential means for achieving the preferred options. All of these options are presented in the final report.

A draft version of the report was circulated among the TRIP committee and to those who had participated in the final meetings to ensure there was general agreement with the final set of options. The minimal amount of feedback was incorporated into the final report.

APPENDIX 4: RESULTS FROM PRIORITIZING OPTIONS AT THE FINAL MEETING

Options for increasing affordable transportation (illustrating “dotmocratic” voting results)

leverage day pass



transferrable bus passes



remove transit user fees (for people with low incomes)



free pass to ODSP, OW, subsidized housing



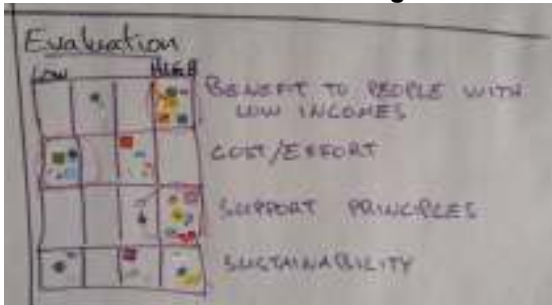
leverage smart card



Options to endorse (which were not subject to 'voting')

- prioritize active trans and multi-modal infrastructure
- identify low income areas/neighbourhoods for trans-related improvements
- support car pooling
- partnerships around resources and administration
- integrate Grand River Car Share and Grand River Transit corporate memberships
- support/partnerships around education/awareness of transportation options

resources from other levels of government



align resources/expertise, partnerships



(See full list of options and ideas in Appendix 2)