
FIXING TRANSIT

**PRESENTATION TO
BURLINGTON CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
FEBRUARY 7, 2019**



BURLINGTON FOR ACCESSIBLE SUSTAINABLE TRANSIT



BFASTRANSIT.CA

FIXING TRANSIT

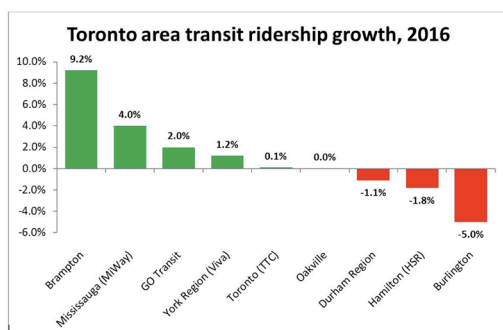
Presentation to Burlington City Council Committee of the Whole Meeting on the 2019 Budget by Burlington for Accessible Sustainable Transit February 7, 2019

It gives BFAST great pleasure to congratulate the newly elected members of Burlington City Council on their foresight and their commitment to making major improvements in our transit system. Council has taken an important step, with this year's proposed budget, in not only reversing years of neglect, but in improving the system to the benefit of transit and automobile users alike.

As transit users, we in BFAST eagerly look forward to more frequent and reliable service. If successful, Burlington's improved transit system will be of value to automobile users as well, in reducing congestion and stress on our roadways.

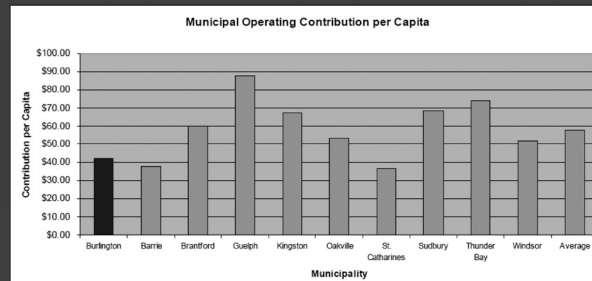
BACKGROUND

Transit cutbacks in 2012-13 resulted in near disaster for Burlington Transit. Ridership plummeted. Deferred maintenance caused reliability and safety problems. The system was near the breaking point.



How Does Burlington Transit Compare?

Financial Performance



In 2017, Burlington Transit's new director, Sue Connor, led a presentation to Council with a detailed analysis of how the underfunding of Burlington Transit had resulted in a dangerous situation where, in order to keep the under-staffed system running, BT had continuously violated provincial labour and safety standards. Transit staff concluded that emergency funding was needed immediately.

As a result of this presentation, Council did provide the requested emergency funding — the first increase in transit spending in many years. (The staff also made it clear that even with the emergency funding, Burlington “would still have a crappy system, but it would now be able to operate safely and within the law.”)

The October 2018 election resulted in a huge turnover in Council. Nearly all of the successful candidates supported improvements to transit and said so in their responses to BFAST’s election questionnaire. Your responses indicated support for increasing the funding level of Burlington transit to the average of other GTA municipalities. Therefore, we were very pleased to see that the proposed 2019 budget and the 10-year capital budget do provide for gradual increases. This will mean more buses, handivans, drivers and mechanics, and a sustainable transit infrastructure. The proposed budget is a very good first step in building a first-class transit system to serve the people of Burlington.

TRANSIT IS AN INVESTMENT

Studies sponsored by the Canadian Urban Transit Association, the City of Hamilton and the US Public Transit Association have all concluded that investment in transit brings significant economic returns. A major transportation study done for Waterloo Region rejected major spending on new roads in favour of investment in transit. Although their new light-rail system is not yet finished, the regional government is already seeing significant cost savings in road construction (including parking facilities), as bus ridership has increased with more frequent service.

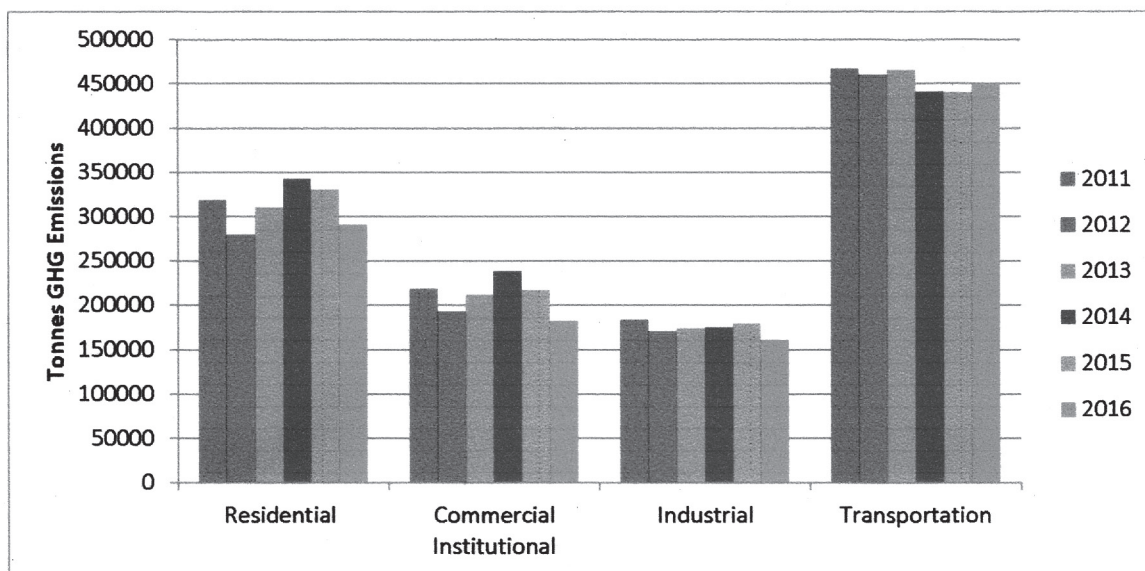


REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN *Summary*



But it is not only in road construction and maintenance that investment in transit brings demonstrated returns. With employees able to commute by transit, Burlington businesses can solve a good part of their difficulty in attracting workers. Families who use transit instead of a second (or third) car can save thousands of dollars per year — money that is plowed back into the local economy. Transit that works helps our young people get to school and their jobs. It alleviates isolation for seniors. And it helps those who are less advantaged to more fully participate in the city’s job market and economic life.

Community Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Sector - 2011 – 2016



Transit is also an important investment in the environment and in our health. As a nation, we are not good at measuring the cost of our over-dependence on automobiles. What is the real cost of the pollutants and environmental degradation caused by too many personal vehicles? What does it cost our healthcare system when people drive to the mall, rather than walk a block or two and take transit? Such questions are certainly beyond the scope of municipal governments to solve. Yet municipal governments — like every other Canadian institution — are part of the solution. Getting people out of their cars and into transit has significant social benefits that cannot as yet be quantified.

FOLLOWING THROUGH

We congratulate Council on the vision for transit implied by the increases proposed in the budget. Our major concern is that staff have specifically included the increases in transit's operating budget as items that might be cut. Since transit is the most under-funded of city services, it would be unfair to cut this very needed increase. We urge Council to send a clear and strong message that fixing our transit system is a priority in this budget.

We have one other suggestion to pass along to Council. We believe the various departments involved in transportation in Burlington are operating in silos. We are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on studies that have no connection to each other. The transit study that Council approved has no connection to the larger transportation study that is supposed to provide a way forward for all modes of transportation in Burlington.

The lack of visible action on the overall transportation study, however, provides us with an opportunity. The city can start afresh. We recommend the same type of study as Waterloo Region did, exploring car-dependent and pro-transit alternatives to determine how resources could be used most efficiently.

All of which is respectfully submitted,

Doug Brown, Chair
BFAST Steering Committee