

**Free Student Transit Meeting
Minutes**

Wednesday, July 17, 2019
City of Burlington, City Hall, Rm. 247

In attendance:

Halton District School Board (HDSB):

- Stuart Miller, Director of Education, HDSB
- Roxana Negoï, Superintendent of Business Services, HDSB
- Andréa Grebenc, Burlington Trustee – Wards 3 and 6, and HDSB Board of Trustees Chair
- Leah Reynolds, Burlington Trustee – Wards 1 and 2
- Amy Collard, Burlington Trustee – Ward 5
- Margo Shuttleworth, Burlington Trustee – Ward 4

Halton Catholic District School Board (HCDSB):

- Brenda Agnew, Burlington Trustee
- Vincent Iantomasi, Burlington Trustee
- Frederick Thibeault, Senior Manager, Planning Services, HCDSB
- Aaron Lofts, Superintendent of Business Services, HCDSB

Conseil Scolaire Viamonde (CSV), French public school board:

- Jason Rodrigue, Surintendant des Affaires, CSV
- Pierre Girouard, Vice-President of Council and Halton, Hamilton-Wentworth and Brant Trustee

Halton Student Transportation Services:

- Karen Lacroix, General Manager

City of Burlington staff

- Sue Connor, Director of Burlington Transit, City of Burlington
- Catherine Baldelli, Manager of Transit Planning and Business Services, City of Burlington

Burlington Mayor’s Office:

- Mayor Marianne Meed Ward, City of Burlington
- Victoria Al-Samadi, Mayor’s Chief of Staff
- John Bkila, Mayor’s Media and Digital Communications Specialist
- Kaitlyn Fitzpatrick, Mayor’s Summer Intern

Key Topics of Discussion:

Educate/ Overcoming Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A stepped program should be introduced teaching students the important of HOW and WHY you should use transit - Once students are educated, they spread awareness to their friends, cohorts parents, etc., and get more people riding the bus - A big barrier is the stigma around taking the bus - this must be removed
-------------------------------------	---

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A presentation/program, like Halton Regional Police Service’s Building Respect, Attitudes and Values with Others (BRAVO) program, could be created and facilitated by volunteers to teach children about public transit
Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capacity could be an issue – more buses may be needed - A significant amount of staff time would be needed at Burlington Transit to facilitate rollout of this program - Eligibility must be determined (age range) - A bus full of standing students is difficult for drivers to manage – there must be room for paying customers
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Must be free for both conventional buses as well as handivans, per AODA - Heavy marketing/efforts/education in areas where we expect to have a better uptake - Concentrate in pockets of low socio-economic zones where students are having issues getting to school – it is currently not well advertised - The use of yellow buses must continue - Available to all students for equity
Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How long will this take to be implemented? Can something be brought forward when determining the 2020 Budget? - Will it be free for teens 24/7 or just during school hours? Will we be able to support the cost of free transit 24/7? - The region provides schoolboards with a lump sum of money to be used to purchase Subsidized Passed for Low-Income Transit (SPLIT) – will the region be open to continue funding/supporting? - Will the board need to start contributing more funds when more students begin to utilise free transportation services?
Additional Ideas/Thoughts/Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High schools could be treated like a hub at peak times - 4,500 secondary school students with no access to yellow bus services in Burlington - Start with free transit for children aged 12 and under to not only create seamless transportation with GO (already offers free ridership for under 12), but to also run a pilot that is economically viable before the program is offered to all students

Summary:

There are 4,500 students living in Burlington who do not have access to yellow bus services. These children may get driven. To get more students riding the bus to school, work, after-hours school programs or recreation programs, a program could be created teaching children how to ride the bus safely and explaining why the use these services is important.

Since a significant number of staff from Burlington Transit would be required to make this program possible, volunteers can be used to facilitate these learning opportunities. This

would allow more students to feel comfortable taking the bus as well as increase youth ridership.

As the number of people using transit increases, capacity must be taken into consideration. The city must ensure that students who have access to yellow school buses continue to take advantage of this opportunity so that paying riders are still able/comfortable using public transportation. This can also be promoted through media and advertisements directed specifically to areas where these services are expected to have a better uptake.

Finally, while budgets, logistics and routes are being considered, a pilot can be run introducing the idea of free transit to children aged 12 and younger – creating a seamless transportation experience with the GO system (that already offers free ridership for under 12), before rolling the program out to all Burlington students.

Next Steps:

- School boards/trustees will take this information back to the rest of their boards to determine interest in proceeding.
- Mayor to draft a statement of interest to “test the waters” — to determine timing, whether it is feasible, etc.
- Reflect on the City of Kingston transit case. What was done well? What can be improved?
- Create a presentation for an upcoming Committee of the Whole meeting (school board meetings) for the Mayor and Burlington Transit staff to present to educate members on the benefits of this initiative.