

Written Delegation with Figures to November 18, 2019 Burlington City Council Meeting from Tom Muir.

Regarding 5 Year Transit Business Plan

At a November 4 meeting of Committee of the Whole, transportation staff was giving Council Committee an overview of their five year business plan for Transit.

Councilor Sharman had read the report carefully and he had major problems with some of the numbers. He didn't like the math, and he had some very challenging words to staff for what he thought.

Subsequently, he made a motion to forward the staff report to the Council meeting Agenda of Monday, November 18 for further scrutiny and discussion. This motion was carried 5-2.

It will be interesting to see what happens at this meeting and how Council responds to his concerns and position. This analysis and startling assessment of a staff report, by a Councilor, is very unusual in my experience and is what motivated me to write this opinion piece.

“The numbers are all completely wrong, and there are a number of things where they don't make sense”; “Table 5 is completely wrong”; are the gist of what he was reported to say in a story by the Burlington Gazette.

Since I was a citizen member of the City Development Charges Consultation Committee that considered the transportation and transit service plans, and I had expressed serious concerns of my own to this Committee on the transit plans and unfunded costs to 2031, and Councilor Sharman was the Committee Chair, I reached out to him to ask what was behind his serious concerns and the words he chose.

I found we had a lot in common in our views of what is really a complicated situation that is a big deal in its own right, but in particular, for laterals to the City Budget, which happens to be under review right now.

Significantly, the stated focus on Table 5 of the 5 year business plan report goes to the heart of his discontent as the Table summarizes the finances of the 5 year business plan - Planned Operating Costs and Revenue, wherein you can see the bottom line Net Operating Costs, dollars that need to be mostly funded from somewhere in the Budget, going from about \$13.5 million to almost \$20 million annually from 2020 to 2024.

And peering a little closer into some line items you can see another possible alarm bell in the fact that the Operating Costs are comparatively "hard", if implemented, but the Revenue estimates, which are based on the assumed ridership associated with the services provided by the costs, are decidedly "soft", and to the both of us, not believable.

The Gazette story showed Table 5 and I could easily see the large revenue increase assumed for increased ridership by almost 2.5 times, or 250%, in only 5 years. In the DC study, the longer term goal to 2031 is to increase the trip share of transit from the present 2% to 12 %, or exponentially to 600%.

As far as I can discern, neither Mr. Sharman nor I have any idea where this growth is going to come from, and this was also discussed at the DC Committee meetings. This is also being pushed by the Halton Region in their DC study to increase the modal split by assuming it can be done.

In our discussion I think the crux of the matter is shared – the lack of a rationale to show how the transit system configuration proposed will work to provide real results. Remember, this is a Business Plan, and it seems obvious that such a thing should have a firm evidentiary foundation in support of an expectation that it will work.

Mr. Sharman put it this way, and I summarize

1. There was no assessment of the Burlington market, economic factors, routes (maybe 80% of ridership is all routes 1 and 101), long term history of transit numbers, forecast City demographic change and ridership mix impact.
2. Burlington ridership and routes are not much different than they were 20 years ago i.e. primarily between Burlington and Hamilton south of the QEW. The report has no analysis of ridership split between handivan and regular buses routes. Presumably, since we have been adding handivan buses and drivers, and with the increasing elder population % ridership growth the projected growth would be worth knowing.
3. The numbers in the report are entirely unrepresentative of anything to do with Burlington. The report is entirely premised on Region of Halton Modal Split targets for the next 5 years and from there calculating what ridership numbers would have to be in order to meet the 5 year target, which is 23% average growth per year.
4. The consultant then used Canadian Urban Transit Association standards to determine what that meant in terms of how many more buses, drivers, maintenance staff, overhead staff and facilities would need to be added to the budget in each year going forward. CUTA standards are aspirational goals that have been demonstrated to not actually represent any Burlington peer municipality (Jeff Casell, Waterloo University 2012). They are more representative of highly intensified big city circumstances.
5. So when you look at the numbers in the table provided, it shows that the 23% average will be highly front end loaded with a 36.5% growth in year 1 of the plan, i.e. from 2,000,000 riders in 2019 to 2,730,000 in 2020. When Mr. Sharman challenged the consultant on the number he was unable to explain the distribution.
6. The critical concern in this is not so much the report per se, but that that the 2020 budget for the City of Burlington includes funding to purchase 4 new buses and hire 8 new drivers. The report proposes that the City should do that in each of the following four years at a cost of \$millions each year. Keep in mind that 1% increase in the City of Burlington budget equals \$1.6m. Further, that transit revenue, presently, represents less than 25% of operating cost.

The risk is that that the City is about to pour all sorts of real hard dollars into a plan that is completely devoid of any substantive analysis, ridership projections or realistic plan.

The added risk is that costs will go up way more rapidly than ridership... so will taxes. This is at a time when the City is built out and new sources of property tax increases are drying up. Remember the 2019 budget use of reserves to keep tax rate increases low. This is not going to get any easier.

We can agree that “more bus users” would be good, but we do not agree to "any means to get there." If this is the intent then we want it to be said to residents that this is what you are going to do with your plan and their money.

All we have seen so far are assumptions that people will somehow and magically change. The issue is not just change, its change based on impossible levels of different behaviors people are expected to manifest for no reason.

We want to see a Plan based on a modal split that is realistic, and will work to service the needs and wants of residents without forcing people onto buses, or blithely assuming they will walk or bike (doubling from 5 to 10%; remember winter?)), and there will be fewer cars.

I want to see if there is a Plan B, and what form that takes. What rational criteria or indicators are being used to stage or trigger additional service supply, and when do you stop or lag additions? What constitutes success?

What about “failure”? – remember the biking trial project failure; and stagnant transit ridership, at a 2% modal split, that must be completely reversed and exponentially energized upward continuously by 600% by 2029-2031 or so?

I see empty buses all the time - the restored Route 4 going past my house all day through Aldershot is basically empty - so please explain why we need many more?

Does anyone really think the many people assumed as riders are going to willingly give up cars and get on the bus? Please tell me how that works?

For most of my needs, the bus doesn't go there. Walk, and bike and bus all you want, but most people basically have to drive to survive in Burlington and surrounds. It's called needs, and work, and distance, and time, and family and so on in reality.

How to get to Costco, Walmart, Longos, Fortinos, Sobeys, Clappisons Corners, Terra Landscape, Connors Garden Center, Canadian Tire, and so on.

The bus doesn't go there. I need a case of beer, a lawnmower, lumber, groceries for a week, hockey for the kids, music lessons, all of this on Saturday, etc. etc. Try walking, biking or busing this stuff there and home.

For most commuters, except as noted for route 1 and 101, the bus doesn't go there I believe.

I have never sensed a significant latent demand for such a transit service on the part of the majority of residents.

These are big decisions you have to make that are interrelated and not explained.

Have you done financial risk assessment for all costs? When do you stop the experiment? Do you have a fail-safe mechanism?

Remember, Burlington cannot fund transit from DCs, as the transit plans to add services are considered to be largely "benefits to existing" residents. So there are large cost additions to be funded, and very small contributions for transit from developers as part of the ever-growing need for transportation services due to growth in Burlington and Halton Region. Also remember the provincial policy drivers that are forcing a renewed Grow Bold, at higher cost to the city.

It's time that this transit cost burden on the city, and not the development responsible, be reconsidered or the transit plans will not be sustainable and fully funded, which is what the transportation staff have said is needed and the goal.

In conclusion, If staff are going to direct the city to implement the transit and transportation quantitative plan identified, and Council agrees to approve this, with all the costs identified with no visible tracking of results, and triggering of rational incremental system steps based on results, and financial risk assessment and management controls in place, then they must be held transparent and accountable for showing how it is realistic and founded on evidence, visible trends, and realistic/rational possibilities for changing the behavior of city residents in the substantive way described.

I was told that this issues set identifies an area where we have to improve and that's communication. I believe we're looking for the same things and that's a sustainable, funded transportation system that moves us (likely slowly) away from total auto dependency over the long run while keeping in mind that the auto is still the primary mode of travel.

You can buy and supply all the buses you want, but getting people to demand and use these is an entirely different matter, conceptually and practically. I don't think it legitimate to try and force people into acceptance of a rejigging of their lives.

I see nothing presently, or moving forward from this, that shows awareness of what the actual problem is other than attributing it to people not liking it or the change. The change is not the problem. It's the change based on impossible levels of different behaviors people are expected to manifest for no reason.

I see no fact-based explanation for why people should or could use a significant and costly increase in transit and pay the estimated large cost share, as calculated. I support some transit increase, but I see no demonstration and evidence-based reasoning to support what I see here, never mind the DC Plan to 2031.

This needs evidence, and not just rationalization, to show how the transit system configuration proposed will work to provide real results. All I have seen so far are assumptions that people will somehow and magically change.

Finally, remember a basic principle governing any planning exercise is; “that everything that starts with a faulty premise is bound to fail”

Tom Muir

Table 5: Planned Operating Costs and Revenue 2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
Operating Costs					
Conventional	\$20,254,600	\$21,636,900	\$23,019,200	\$24,901,400	\$26,283,700
Service Structure and Delivery					
On-demand	\$295,000	\$590,000	\$885,000	\$1,180,000	
Alternative Service					
Delivery					
On-demand	\$14,000	\$14,000	\$14,000	\$14,000	
Alternative Service & Integrated					
Specialized Transit					
Software					
Organizational	\$2,380,000	\$3,440,000	\$4,560,000	\$5,600,000	
Structure and Staffing					
Maintenance	\$2,058,140	\$2,431,400	\$2,566,500	\$2,746,600	\$2,881,700
Servicing					
Contract					
Total Operating Cost	\$22,312,740	\$26,757,300	\$29,629,700	\$33,107,000	\$35,959,400
Revenue					
Passenger	\$5,165,500	\$7,801,000	\$9,641,000	\$11,482,000	\$13,322,000
Revenue					
Gas Tax Funding (Operating)	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
Gas Tax Funding	\$2,385,390	\$2,618,273	\$2,842,865	\$3,067,457	\$3,292,049
Free Off-peak	-\$163,000	-\$206,000	-\$249,000	-\$293,000	-\$336,000
Travel for Seniors					
Affordability	-\$160,000	-\$202,000	-\$245,000	-\$288,000	-\$330,000
Free Transit for	-\$54,000	-\$65,000	-\$77,000	-\$88,000	
Children					
Discount Student	-\$275,333	-\$826,000	-\$1,000,000	-\$1,174,000	
Pass					
Advertising	\$476,000	\$480,000	\$485,000	\$490,000	\$500,000
Revenue					
Charters,	\$94,000	\$95,000	\$97,000	\$99,000	\$100,000
Commissions & Other Revenue					
Total Revenue	\$8,797,890	\$11,256,940	\$12,280,865	\$14,480,457	\$16,286,049
Net Operating Costs	\$13,514,850	\$15,500,360	\$16,948,835	\$18,626,543	\$19,673,351
Free Transit for Children - Business Case			-\$42,250		
Expansion Buses Operating Costs - Business Case			\$833,737		
Increase from Base Budget			\$791,487		

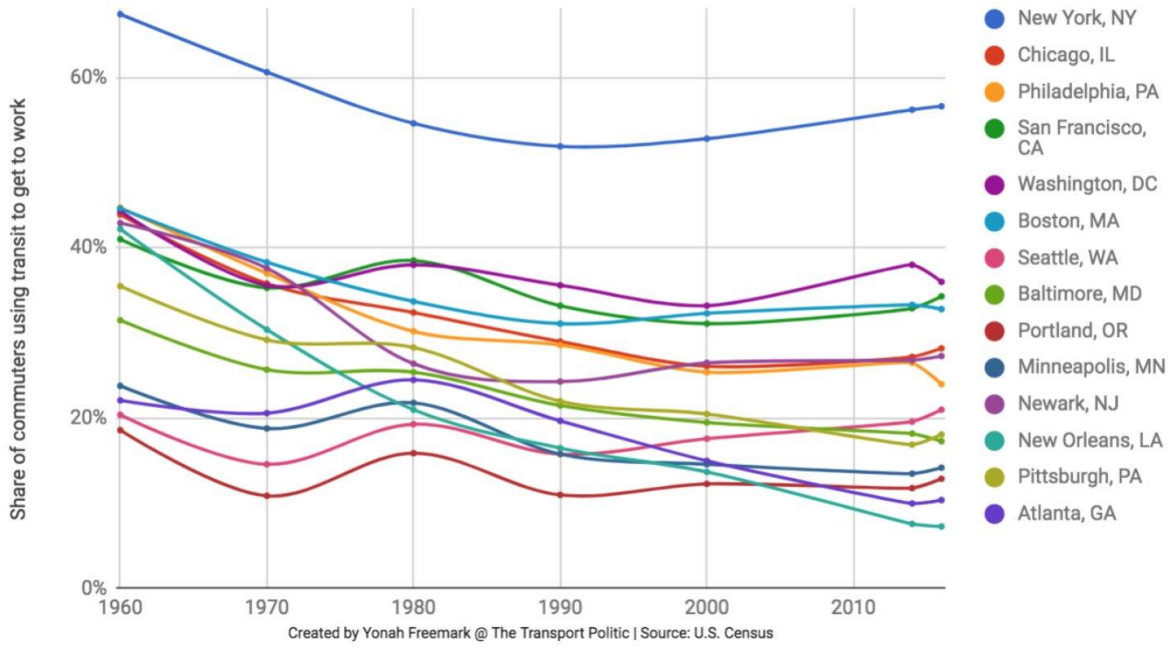
Figures

Table 1
City of Burlington
2024 Transit Corridor Projections to 2031

Route	Corridors	(A)			(B)			(C = A x B)			(D = C / 30)			(E)			(F = C x D / E, rounded up)		
		Length (KM)			Scheduled Average Speed (km/h)			Travel Time (mins)			Minimum Journey (mins)			Peak Headway (mins)			Full Vehicle Capacity		
		2018	2031	Difference	2018	2031	Difference	2018	2031	Difference	2018	2031	Difference	2018	2031	Difference	2018	2031	Difference
101	Pelins	41.11	30.08	-11.03	25.4	30.0	4.6	623	60.14	-2.15	6.53	6.00	-0.51	15	2031	6	9	3	
21	Bayview	18.68	13.68	-5.00	27.5	25.0	-2.5	2935	32.83	-3.03	2.98	3.20	0.30	30	24	2	7	5	
3	Bees	10.50	24.24	13.74	24.4	25.0	0.6	2756	26.18	-0.43	4.75	3.80	-0.95	30	10	20	7	3	
3	Sturtevant	32.78	25.80	-6.98	21.1	25.0	3.9	9321	61.63	-31.39	9.32	6.50	-3.13	30	10	20	4	3	
10	Bees	24.75	24.75	-	25.0	25.0	-	5940	39.20	-	5.94	3.94	-	20	15	5	6	3	
11	Appony	24.25	21.80	-2.45	25.0	25.0	-	6060	35.92	-3.88	3.95	3.94	-	30	15	15	2	3	
20	Burton's Lakeshore	10.50	10.50	-	33.7	25.0	-8.7	1834	29.39	-6.56	1.88	2.50	0.66	30	12	18	3	2	
12	Upper Middle	23.77	23.77	-	30.3	25.0	-5.3	4676	37.03	-10.23	4.68	3.70	-0.93	30	8	22	2	6	
25	Walkers	21.34	21.34	-	25.0	25.0	-	4415	51.22	7.06	4.42	5.33	0.71	30	10	20	2	4	
	Dundas	14.73	14.73	-	25.0	25.0	-	3535	35.35	-	3.54	3.54	-	15	15	-	3	3	
80	Harvester	14.82	14.82	-	25.5	30.0	4.5	3487	44.46	9.99	3.49	4.40	0.96	30	10	20	2	3	
4	Bees	25.60	30.08	4.48	23.4	25.0	1.6	6030	72.15	12.15	6.00	7.23	1.23	30	10	3	4	1	
5	North Shore	15.73	15.73	-	24.8	25.0	0.2	3806	37.73	-0.30	3.81	3.78	-0.03	30	30	-	2	1	
6	Mainway-Headon	21.50	21.50	-	26.5	25.0	-1.5	4872	51.63	-2.92	4.87	3.16	-1.71	30	10	20	2	1	
48	Middleton	6.96	6.96	-	22.6	25.0	2.4	1848	16.70	-1.77	1.83	1.67	-0.16	30	30	-	1	1	
81	North Service	33.51	33.51	-	29.5	30.0	0.5	6816	67.02	-1.14	6.83	6.70	-0.11	30	10	3	4	1	
82	Penelope Park	18.47	18.47	-	25.0	25.0	-	4433	44.33	-	4.43	4.43	-	60	60	-	1	1	
	Total/Average	338.45	293.36	-45.09	26.8	29.3	2.5	4798	48.91	0.94	4.80	4.89	0.09	30.33	16.88	-11.95	38	50	12

Route	Corridors	(G)		
		Ridership		
		2018	2031	Difference
	Total	1,960,000	10,743,637	8,783,637

Commuting by transit, 1960-2016, Major transit cities



**City of Burlington 2019 D.C. Study
New Projects Identified in 2019 D.C. Study by Service**

	Date	Gross Capital Cost	D.C. Recoverable Cost
<u>Fire Protection Services</u>			
Fire Master Plan and Community Risk Assessment	2019	150,000	60,000
<u>Transportation Services</u>			
Harvester Road at Walker's Line Intersection Improvements & Widening	2028	5,800,000	2,755,000
Harvester Road Sidewalk (South Service Road to Century Drive)	2020	1,080,000	972,000
Integrated Mobility Plan	2030	400,000	160,000
Asset Management Plan - Legislated Update	2020	50,000	20,000
<u>Transit Services</u>			
Burlington Transit Operations Expansion	2021	650,000	26,325
Burlington Transit Operations Expansion	2022	10,500,000	425,250
Burlington Transit Operations Expansion	2023	10,500,000	425,250
Transit 5 Year Business Plan Update	2023	250,000	11,475
Stop and Shelter Improvements at Key City Locations	2020	500,000	22,950
Stop and Shelter Improvements at Key City Locations	2021	500,000	22,950
Fairview Street Bus Bays	2019	402,000	68,340
Expansion Conventional Transit Vehicles	2019	1,901,745	323,297
Expansion Conventional Transit Vehicles	2020	1,267,830	58,193
Expansion Conventional Transit Vehicles	2021	1,267,830	58,193
Expansion Conventional Transit Vehicles	2022	1,267,830	58,193
Expansion Conventional Transit Vehicles	2023	1,267,830	58,193
Expansion Conventional Transit Vehicles	2024	1,901,745	87,290
Expansion Conventional Transit Vehicles	2025	1,901,745	87,290
Expansion Conventional Transit Vehicles	2026	1,901,745	87,290
Expansion Conventional Transit Vehicles	2027	1,901,745	87,290
Expansion Conventional Transit Vehicles	2028	1,901,745	87,290
Expansion Handi-Van Vehicles	2019	233,700	39,729
Expansion Handi-Van Vehicles	2020	233,700	39,729
Expansion Handi-Van Vehicles	2022	233,700	39,729
Expansion Handi-Van Vehicles	2024	233,700	39,729
Expansion Handi-Van Vehicles	2026	233,700	39,729
Expansion Handi-Van Vehicles	2027	233,700	39,729
Expansion Handi-Van Vehicles	2028	233,700	39,729
<u>Parks and Recreation Services</u>			
Multi-Use Trail	2024	100,000	21,600
Multi-Use Trail	2025	909,100	196,366
Multi-Use Trail	2026	909,100	196,366
Multi-Use Trail	2027	909,100	196,366
Multi-Use Trail	2028	909,100	196,366
Multi-Use Trail - Sheldon Creek	2021	200,000	43,200
Multi-Use Trail, Hydro Corridor - Mainway to Upper Middle	2022	350,000	75,600
<u>Library Services</u>			
Library (New Appleby) - Southeast Service Expansion Study	2020	30,000	15,519

Note: project list does not include removed/completed projects.