

Burlington Seniors' Advisory Committee Position Paper on Transit in Burlington

The Burlington Seniors' Advisory Committee is committed to supporting a transit system that serves not only the seniors of our city but all of our communities. While reduced fares or free transit periods are aspects of transit policy that will help get seniors out of their cars and on the bus, BSAC believes that a well-funded, efficient and constantly improving Burlington Transit system that better serves the needs of seniors will better serve the entire city. To that end BSAC has developed this position paper on transit in Burlington which is a comprehensive, wide ranging position, broader in scope than just seniors' transit issues.

It concludes with recommendations for short term, medium term and long range actions to reach the BSAC objective that **"Improving Transit for Seniors Improves Transit for Everybody"** and contributes significantly to the achievement of Burlington's Strategic Plan 2015-2040.

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Summary:

This synopsis is intended to provide an outline and provoke interest in the BSAC position on transit. It provides page references to the fully detailed arguments and the research in their support. The main body of the paper commences on page four. BSAC believes the effort to read the full paper will be rewarded with deeper insight into our ideas for the future of public transit in Burlington.

The Major Objectives of the BSAC Paper are:

- To improve service and increase ridership of Burlington Transit.
- To get more people out of cars and on to transit.
- To move the city towards achievement of its 25 year Strategic Plan.
- Contribute to growth in our city.
- Reduce traffic congestion and improve road safety in Burlington.
- Reduce CO2 emissions and help limit global warming.
- Provide a safe, dignified means of transport for many who suffer restricted mobility.
- Address the paradox that those most in need of public transit are those least able to afford it.

This paper recommends steps City Council should consider to achieve these objectives.

- A. Improving transit for seniors improves transit for all (see pages 4, 5)
- B. Improving frequency and reliability of transit service particularly on community routes (see pages 5, 6, 10, 12)
- C. Utilizing appropriately sized buses for divergent route types and purposes (see pages 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12)
- D. Restoring service stops in major malls, community, cultural and health centres (see pages 7, 10, 11)
- E. Return to 70/30 division of transit/roads Gasoline Tax Funding (see pages 7, 11)
- F. Free transit for seniors who lose the ability to drive due to age or infirmity (see page 8)
- G. Eliminating means testing for split pass travel (see page 8)
- H. Filling the buses by allowing Burlington seniors to travel free during off-peak hours. (see pages 8, 9)

Introduction:

Public transit is one of the most complex issues facing cities and indeed nations today. It poses a series of problems that are complicated and difficult to solve. Every city, every politician wants successful transit systems. They move people, contribute to growth, reduce congestion, improve road safety, reduce CO2 emissions, help limit global warming, provide a safe means of transport for many who would otherwise suffer restricted employment and social mobility.

The paradox is that those most in need of public transit are those least able to afford it. The elderly, the young, the working poor, students, single parents, physically and intellectually challenged citizens and, returning to the elderly, those who have had driver's licenses rescinded due to age related health issues.

Putting aside any notion of "seniors entitlement", BSAC wants to add the voice of seniors' experience, knowledge and love of our city to the transit debate. Of course we recommend improvements in transit that benefit seniors, but we do so very firmly from the perspective that: **"Whatever Improves Transit for Seniors, Improves Transit for Everybody"**. This philosophical principle improves transit for our children and grandchildren, improves transit for Burlington and improves Burlington as: **A City that Grows, A City that Moves, A Healthy and Greener City, An Engaging City**, achieving all of the elements of our city's 25 year strategic plan.

Among politicians there is an almost universal love affair with the benefits of public transit. This is logically offset by concerns about how cities will finance the level of public transit required to achieve all of our lofty goals. The dichotomy has always been whether to wait for increased ridership to justify the cost of improving transit or, to invest in improved transit and trust that the ridership will follow.

This BSAC position paper hopes to point a way that allows Burlington to take some simple, relatively inexpensive actions that will increase ridership, contribute towards some of the social and environmental issues facing every city, and offer medium and longer term improvements that might make Burlington Transit a model for other medium sized city transit systems which becomes a showcase for the city worldwide.

In this age of 140 character tweets and 30 second sound bites, at 20 pages this paper may seem long but complex issues require complex analysis and complex data to support that analysis. It is our hope that the effort to read the document will be rewarded with solid insights and achievable ideas for the future.

Section 1 - BSAC Positions on Burlington Transit

A. Improving Transit for Seniors Improves Transit for All

As cities like Burlington plan for and continue to grow with increased density, accommodating an aging population while balancing that with working adult demographic retention, meeting the needs of industry and commerce to ensure that the city tax and commercial bases remain vibrant, while maintaining a social fabric for our challenged citizens and with increasing pressure to reduce our carbon footprint and help contain climate change, it becomes very obvious that better utilization of our transit system helps us meet all of these complex and diverse goals.

Improved utilization of transit is a complex issue which challenges us to change our traditional views of automobile based travel, convenience of travel, the social, economic and environmental impact of present travel modes. Change on this societal level is never easy to achieve. People are naturally resistant to change and that resistance is more ingrained in older members of society while younger people are more apt to embrace change.

Imagine then, a transit system that is so convenient, so comfortable, so reliable and so affordable that it encourages our senior citizens to embrace the notion of public transit? If we can improve transit to a point where those most resistant to change, seniors, can get on the bus, we believe we can get everybody on the bus.

B. Improved Frequency and Reliability of Transit Service

As our city strives to achieve greater utilization of public transit, seniors and many others, more comfortable with their cars, are reluctant to move from the outmoded, car centric sprawl and do not use transit. This limits the city's ability to improve transit utilization.

Studies confirm that the greatest barriers to increasing transit usage are frequency, convenience and reliability of service. They point to the fact that predictable reliability in bus time arrival and frequencies closer to 15 minutes may be the biggest determinants of whether people of any age or social grouping switch from cars to transit.

While much has been done by Burlington Transit in terms of technology for fare collection and real-time bus availability information, in the longer term making public transport a more favourable and better utilized resource will require investment in these increased levels of service, frequency of service and reliability of service that will create the paradigm shift in public attitudes. Waiting for ridership to improve before committing is exactly the opposite of the steps required.

We must be forward looking and bold enough to start investing in our city as we might like to see it in the future and not as it has looked in the past.

C. Synchronize Smaller Community Buses to Larger Bus Hub to Hub Routes

To counter-balance an aging population with a more vital younger demographic, the city's Strategic Plan envisages mobility hubs of younger urban professionals centred on Metrolinx and GO commuter hubs. To that end, until now, transit planning has favoured larger 30 and 40 foot buses serving commuter stations along arterial roads and major thoroughfares. This has resulted in several unintended but detrimental consequences.

- i The majority of our bus inventory is larger 30 and 40 foot buses designed for that plan which is then cumbersome when trying to serve the needs of community travellers.
- ii Because the system is designed around serving commuter hubs it is well utilized during peak commuting hours but these routes are almost derelict during off peak hours approximately 10 am to 3 pm and after 6 pm.
- iii Investment in the Commuter Hub concept has been at the expense of community bus services. This has resulted in lower levels of service, frequency and reliability of service to the residential, retail and commercial community bus services. This is the very opposite of the things that promote and encourage transit usage as previously outlined in Section B.
- iv While recent attempts have been made to remedy this lack of community bus service, by re-introducing some limited, hourly service, community connection routes, this is a Band-aid solution and is precisely the kind of service that discourages rather than encourages ridership. It needs to be revisited and reviewed as part of a whole transit strategy.

As Burlington Transit invests to improve levels, frequency and reliability of service, it makes better sense to invest in smaller more versatile 15/25 seat buses (such as the Star Trans or Odyssey buses used by HSR to service Waterdown routes) which can more readily ply the community routes, re-establish links with retail and commercial routes and help balance capacity to demand. Also in a time of growing concern for age related health issues, connection with health and medical centres should be a transit priority that will be better served by smaller more flexible buses.

The acquisition cost of smaller buses is around 20% to 25% of larger buses allowing increased fleet inventory to provide the increase in service levels and frequency without detracting from the commuter hub / arterial route model. Community services can be integrated fairly easily and the increased usage and ridership in off peak hours will allow better allocation and scheduling of drivers to eliminate or minimize troublesome shift splits.

In these days of computer modeling and a future of connectivity between transit vehicles and systems, BSAC proposes a combination of larger buses serving arterial and Metrolinx hubs while smaller buses service tertiary community services creating smaller community transit hubs, with schedules interconnected and coordinated so that commuter and community routes and systems overlap and complement each other seamlessly to improve service predictability and reduce wait times.

D. Routing Community Bus Services through Satellite Seniors' Centres and City Cultural, Sports and Library Facilities

As Parks and Recreation adult program staff work with BSAC and other users to better utilize our city's existing community centres and facilities for seniors' activities, smaller community bus services will link these hubs to user communities making travel to more local activity centres easier for seniors and other user groups and making it easier to get people on the bus. Other potential community destinations and routes might include: Joseph Brant Hospital, medical centres, sports and cultural centres the city rightly prides itself on such as the Burlington Performing Arts Centre, Royal Botanical Gardens, Haber Sports Centre, all our parks, libraries and arenas. This is another example where improving transit for seniors improves transit for everybody.

E. Restoring Service Stops in Major Malls

Burlington Transit's strategic move to the Commuter Hub Model, along with safety concerns of maneuvering large road buses in the pedestrian areas of malls and larger retail plazas, robbed much of the community of services they considered vital and has brought some economic hardship to some retail areas. As Burlington invests to improve service levels and get more people on the buses, one obvious impact of acquiring smaller buses for community service routes is that services to major retail centres and malls can be restored. Part of the reason for abandoning this popular service was the safety of access, egress and maneuvering larger buses in mall parking lots and the attendant wear and tear on parking lot roadways. Investing in smaller, more versatile buses will allow Burlington Transit to restore and improve these community connection services with increased local transit penetration and frequency.

This is precisely the kind of service that research shows will attract not only seniors, but youth and families on to buses to take advantage of these routes. In the way that bigger buses on arterial routes are routed through commuter hubs, smaller community buses can be routed through regional and local retail, medical and commercial centres, linking communities to the places they need to be.

These smaller bus community routes would more appropriately service community and cultural Centres from the Haber Centre in Alton Village to the Royal Botanical Gardens in Aldershot and from Tansley Woods and Brant Hills to the Seniors' Centre and all the libraries, pools and arenas in between.

The smaller bus community routes might also service commercial locations from the Riocan Centre in the east to Mapleview Mall in the west and from downtown and Lakeshore Road to both Wal-Mart centres, Burlington Mall and the Alton Community on a north/south orientation with the many health and medical centres along those routes.

Appropriately sized bus services providing Burlington citizens with a way to reach everything, everywhere, for those whose circumstances or lifestyle make transit the travel mode of choice and so convenient that car users are drawn to use public transit too.

F. A Return to 70/30 Division of Transit/Roads Gasoline Tax Funding

Burlington, like every other city, receives a share of federal and provincial gasoline taxes. Historically Council has split that revenue between roads and transit in a 70/30 ratio. For the past several years council increased the roads share to 80% to address a deficit in roads infrastructure spending. While the additional spending on roads may have been justified, it has cost Burlington Transit dearly and seems contradictory to the worldwide and nationwide initiatives to increase transit use and reduce reliance on automobiles.

A return to the previous formula would put approximately \$500,000 per year into the capital and operating budgets for transit. Over a ten year period this would allow the acquisition and staffing of some three smaller 20/30 seat buses each year to service the more frequent community connection routes this paper proposes. Obviously the earlier spending would be capital intensive and eventually when the services are fully equipped and manned, the monies would go to staffing, operating and replacement costs. Maintenance costs on smaller buses will be significantly reduced.

This might result over ten years in as many as 20 to 25 additional, fully staffed and serviced smaller buses plying the community connection routes. This might translate into a service level of around every 20 minutes, if existing routes are maintained. As some of transit's 58 existing bigger buses are retired, leaving enough of course to service the transit hub/arterial corridors, perhaps as many as 10% of them might be replaced with smaller 20/30 seat buses. Allowing for operating costs and staffing levels this might leave a fleet of 40 larger vehicles serving the transit hub/arterial corridors and allowing the acquisition and operation of another 20 to 25 additional, fully staffed and serviced smaller buses plying the community connection routes.

It is possible that without adversely affecting present transit hub, intensification model and bus routes, a rethinking of the type and size of buses used along with a commitment to use gasoline tax funding in a more transit positive manner, Burlington can achieve the level of interconnection of community connection and transit hub routes this paper calls for and which research suggests may provide the service level that gets transit usage in Burlington to a positive direction tipping point.

G. Filling the City's Buses During Off-Peak Hours

It is a sad but true fact that many Burlington residents lose their drivers license due to age or infirmity. For many seniors, isolation and the inability to get around town severely limit the quality of their lives. Sadly, after productive lives of economic and social contribution to our city in terms of work, consumer spending and taxes, a significant number of seniors are relegated to the sidelines of the city's vital social fabric, its economic activity, health, wellness and fitness opportunities and the ability to spend time with families. BSAC asks City Council to rethink the case for allowing such seniors free off-peak travel on Burlington Transit. BSAC considers this a simple humanitarian gesture.

While the split pass option provides relief for some seniors in need, it is BSAC's position that it may cost more to administer at two levels of government than the \$48,500 to \$72,750 loss of revenue by giving all seniors free off-peak transit travel. Applying for the pass is time consuming, bureaucratic

and reliant on the most costly economic approach; regulation and subsidy. It demeans those who are forced to submit their most private financial details in order to qualify. It has been suggested that public transit is often “the transport option of last resort” and only those who have no other transport means use it. If public transit is the transport option of last resort for some citizens, why are those reaching for that last resort required to prove their need?

Every day we all watch off-peak buses pass us by often empty or, at best, grossly underutilized. The capital and operating costs of these empty buses is already built in to their operation. They cost our citizens money while achieving nothing other than impeding traffic, polluting and creating additional greenhouse gases. Imagine those buses filled with seniors travelling to doctors’ appointments, grocery shopping, family visits or yoga classes at one of our city’s many community centres.

Putting seniors on the mostly empty buses is a major first step to improving life and health for seniors. It will also help the city to achieve its transit utilization goals at a cost that is much less than the revenue loss. In fact as the figures in the economic section of this paper show, allowing seniors to ride the buses during off peak hours will have a positive effect on the economy and well-being of our entire city.

Discussion of this topic tends to return to the issues of cost. The only cost to put seniors on off peak buses from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. is the loss of revenue from present seniors fare during those hours. It amounts to between \$48,500 per year and \$72,750 depending on the rate of uptake.

This is less than the amount of one senior’s lifetime city tax contributions (est. \$80,000 to \$120,000). It is 1% of all taxes paid annually by Burlington seniors. It is 0.75% of Burlington Transit’s operating budget.

Subsidies from federal and provincial gas taxes, while somewhat more complex, work out to approximately \$0.69 per passenger journey for Burlington. In 2015 Burlington seniors made 191,000 journeys. If free transit for seniors caused a 50% increase in ridership the increase in gas tax funding would amount to \$66,000 which means that the free transit plan for seniors could pay for itself if properly implemented and utilized.

As seniors we are equally concerned that other economically challenge groups face the challenge of affordable transit. If free transit in off-peak hours brings the increased ridership and all the social, economic and environmental benefits we suggest, then consideration should be given to extending free transit to others in need during these same off-peak hours.

Section 2 - BSAC Transit Positions and Strategic Plan 2015-2040

A City that Grows: Burlington's growth plans target balanced population growth for newcomers, families, youth and seniors. To that end current transit thinking revolves around planned commuter hubs where an influx of working commuters will cluster in high density residences situated by Metrolinx Transit Centres. While this transit model serves that demographic well, it ignores the existing residential, community, commercial and retail centres whose economic and social activity is equally vital to sustaining and growing our city. To maximize the benefits of planned growth transit must continue to service and indeed improve service to those existing demographics. That will mean more flexible, community oriented and connected transit modes. BSAC's position on transit addresses this.

A City that Moves: Those of us who have lived in Burlington for the past 30 or so years have seen explosive growth in traffic congestion. As Burlington strives to encourage growth and increasing population, traffic congestion will only get worse and it's economic and environmental impact more acute. City Council recognizes this and its strategic plan includes alternatives to the automobile, the biggest single contributor to congestion. While cycling, walkability and commuter hubs close to Metrolinx stations will help, the single biggest contributor to relieving congestion will be getting Burlingtonians out of their cars and onto the bus. The best ways to achieve this are all detailed in BSAC's Position on Transit.

A Healthy and Greener City: The Strategic Plan calls for Burlington to be: "A Leader in the Stewardship of the Environment while Encouraging Healthy Lifestyles".

While many choose not to drive and find alternatives that bring a welcome reduction in GHG emissions and traffic congestion, most need to move around our city for work or for pleasure. Incentivizing seniors to leave their cars at home and "Get on The Bus" will help our city achieve this aspect of the Strategic Plan. If Burlington seniors use free transit for even one in ten of their present journeys that might reduce the number of car miles on Burlington streets by a whopping 30 million miles per year, the equivalent of taking 2000 cars per year off our roads reducing carbon emissions by some 7000 tones. Further, by making transit more convenient; more available, and more accessible for everyone, just think how these numbers might grow.

BSAC's Position paper on Transit provides a framework to facilitate this at little if any cost to the city and looking at the larger economic and social costs of congestion and greenhouse gas emissions, there is actually a large, though difficult to quantify, economic benefit.

An Engaging City: The Strategic Plan envisions a city where community members are engaged, empowered, welcomed and well served by their city; creating a positive sense of place, inclusivity and community.

Burlington seniors number about 17% of our population and that is projected to be approximately 30% by 2041. Not all of them will be able to drive. How do we engage, empower and serve that huge section of our population if they have age related mobility, transit and travel issues?

Our city has done wonderful things in improving and enhancing our arts, cultural and sports engagement and facilities over the years, our community centres, libraries and our very own Seniors' Centre are the envy of the province. The city continues to enhance seniors' activities while moving them closer to the communities where seniors live, yet all of this may be futile if age related mobility, transit and travel issues reduce seniors' ability to engage with a city that seeks such engagement. Engaging senior's means getting them to their social, commercial and health destinations and improving transit helps our city achieve that.

Section 3 - Recommendations for Transit Derived from BSAC Positions

A. Long Term Planning & Investment Initiatives

Burlington must move from its current one size fits all transit philosophy. It must adapt its current big bus/commuter hub/arterial route to a better integrated, balanced commuter/community mixed model and connected system that serves all of its citizens, all of their communities and all of their needs.

This will allow us to move from the outmoded urban sprawl; that so typifies Burlington to the high density livable hubs model foreseen in the strategic plan without abandoning those citizens, particularly seniors, whose needs and lifestyles will still be based on the older, traditional model for the foreseeable future.

This will require increasing long term investment in smaller more nimble buses while reducing investment in larger arterial buses to achieve that balance between commuter and community services. As many of the larger buses reach lifetime ends they should be replaced by more of the smaller units. Four or five smaller buses may be acquired for the cost of one retiring large bus.

Capital and replacement costs will be reduced, while the bus fleet grows in a more balanced way but operating costs will rise as greater numbers of smaller buses provide more frequent, more reliable and more meaningful community services. Commuter/arterial routes will not be affected other than being better integrated with the improved community connection services.

B. Medium Term Achievable Objectives

A return to 70/30 division of transit/roads gasoline tax funding. While money from this program is committed to roads and infrastructure in the immediate term, looking forward, the 25 year strategic plan and the wider need for communities to get out of their cars and onto the buses will be better served by restoring or improving this share of funding to transit. This will provide approximately \$500,000 per year much of the investment capital for smaller buses along with the ongoing reduction in replacement costs of some of our larger buses.

It may also be possible to increase transit share of this 70/30 divide if 2016 Federal Budget Infrastructure Funding is applied for and committed to roads and the infrastructure deficit to make up any perceived or real shortfall as gasoline tax funding shifts to transit. This federal budget finance is a source that Burlington Transit is already preparing to pursue pending more detail from the government.

The increasing amounts of Federal / Provincial Gasoline Tax gained by increased ridership with the shorter term immediate actions will provide approximately \$65,000 to \$132,000 annually in additional funding to help meet these medium and long term objectives.

These medium term objectives must work toward the longer term rebalancing of larger/smaller bus inventory and the long term goals of integrating the commuter/arterial routes with the proposed improvements and interconnection to the Community Connection Routes that will link retail/commercial/cultural/health and community centers.

C. Immediately Implementable Actions

Some of the Community Connection Bus Routing is already being re-established by Burlington Transit in a belated recognition that the shift to commuter hubs went too far. It also indicates that much of our position paper may also be correct. So far most of the re-connected services are hourly services which do not go nearly far enough to either serve the community fully or to meet the criteria that will move people from cars to transit but is a move back towards the correct direction.

As some of the medium and long term recommendations are implemented, it is hoped the bus inventory and budget will be put in place to keep improving this to a level that will make transit a travel mode of choice rather than one of last resort..

Allowing seniors to ride Burlington Transit for free between the hours of 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. is the single action that will make an immediate impact on Burlington seniors, Burlington Transit and will start the movement towards all of the medium and long term plans and initiatives outlined in BSAC's position on transit.

Section 4 - Bigger Picture Arguments in Favour of BSAC Positions

A. Economic

In 2006 traffic congestion cost the GTHA some 6 billion dollars. That is projected to grow to 15 billion dollars by 2031. In 2016 that cost of congestion will be close to 9.6 billion dollars. With a population of some 185,000 of the 6.5 million in the GTHA, Burlington shares some of these productivity/economic losses. While a direct per capita share of these costs may not be a perfect ratio it is indicative that traffic congestion might be costing every Burlington citizen \$1,475 per year or the whole city a colossal \$265,000,000 (yes that is \$265 million).

Allowing Burlington seniors to take one in ten journeys on the bus will reduce those costs and may return an annual economic benefit to the city that could be as high as \$3,875,000.

Even in simpler economic terms, most seniors are no longer net savers; they are at that stage in life when they are spending pensions, allowances and savings. Every dollar spent by a senior has an “economic multiplier” effect of about \$5.80. Assuming that Burlington seniors spend all the money they save on free transit on local retail, restaurant or fitness activities, Burlington’s local economy would be pumped between \$282,000 and \$420,000 more than offsetting any transit revenue reduction.

B. Social

In all discussions with councillors and city staff the recurring theme is that if the “Business Case” for free off-peak or any other transit help can be made, it will be difficult to sway their vote. So how do you write a convincing business case for something you want to give away? Indeed, why do City Councils require Business Cases in the first place? Agreed, cities should provide services efficiently and cost effectively but a business case suggests councillors expect these services to be profitable. Which begs the existential question: **Why do cities exist?**

Cities exist to provide those services, essential to the public but are not feasible on an individual basis. Things like schools, libraries, roads, sewage, garbage collection and public transit. Cities provide accessibility services for the handicapped, wheelchair ramps and Braille signs on elevators with no business case or financial return expected, nor should there be. We recoil at making money from people’s infirmities. Councils spend public money on those services because the “Social Case” far outweighs any “Business Case”.

So let us consider the social case for “Free Off-Peak Transit for seniors in Burlington.

Economists and politicians at every level of government voice concerns about the long-term viability of public and private pension schemes. They seek ways to increase pensions and allowances for the elderly while reluctant to raise taxes or contributions. Providing free off-peak transit to seniors, reducing their transport or automobile costs provides a very simple virtual pension increase without raising a cent in taxes or contributions.

If free transit allows senior couples to give up one of their two cars, they gain huge savings. The annual cost of car ownership in GTHA is estimated to be around \$5,000. Seniors who reduce their annual car usage, saving a tank of gas every month might put between \$500 and \$700 per year in their pocket. These amounts of money saved by seniors amounts to a significant increase in discretionary spending, a virtual pension increase at no cost to the government. This is much more than any pension increase proposal we are aware of from any level of government.

Relying strictly on a business case abandons those who cannot afford a car or those no longer able to drive because of age, infirmity or encroaching decline in mental capacity. The business case ignores the well documented impact of less capable elderly drivers on road safety and accidents.

BSAC asks City Council to rethink the social case for seniors' transit and look at a bigger vision.

C. Environmental

Most Burlingtonians probably consider our city too small to have a major impact on the environment. When we consider the enormity of the issue there is a feeling of impotence and that anything we do will be insignificant. Recalling the words of English political writer; Sydney Smith: **"It is the greatest of all mistakes to do nothing because you can only do little."**

Approximately thirty thousand Burlington seniors drive an average of 15,000 km per year, even allowing for some spousal car sharing, and emit 105,000 tones of CO2 into the atmosphere. Every car taken off the road by affordable transit for seniors reduces this annual amount by 3.5 tones.

As pointed out in much greater detail in the Economic section, in 2016 Burlington's share of the enormous productivity/economic losses is huge if unseen. While a direct per capita share of these costs may not be a perfect ratio it is indicative; traffic congestion might be costing every Burlington citizen \$1,475 per year or the whole city a colossal \$265,000,000. Allowing Burlington seniors to take one in ten journeys on the bus, the economic benefit to the city, its people and business owners might be as high as \$3,875,000.

If Burlington seniors use free transit for even one in ten of their present journeys that might reduce the number of car miles on Burlington streets by approximately 30 million miles per year, the equivalent of taking 2,000 cars per year off our roads reducing carbon emissions by some 7,000 tones. This does not factor in wear and tear on the roads that will result in work which expends carbon emissions to refurbish.

D. Traffic Congestion

Seniors using transit for one in five journeys would reduce traffic congestion by 3.3%. Such a reduction has a major impact on traffic flow and commute times particularly at peak volumes.

As well as shifting people from cars to buses, the idea of seniors riding the buses free in off-peak hours shifts a significant portion of the volume from peak to off-peak hours. As well as a reduction in seniors' cars on the road at peak times there will be reduction in the number and size of buses required at peak times.

The more attractive the incentive to switch seniors from cars to transit and away from peak congestion hours, the greater that improvement will be. More seniors on transit allows working people, business transport and goods to move more efficiently, improving productivity, and supporting the vibrant business environment our city strives to encourage in the Strategic Plan.

E. Traffic Safety

It is a sad but true fact that as we age our cognitive abilities and response times deteriorate giving rise to very real road safety concerns for seniors who drive, their loved ones and traffic authorities. Impaired vision, dementia, failing cognitive skills and reduced reactivity affect an individual's ability to drive. Statistics Canada reports that drivers over 70, when adjusted for miles driven, rank second in percentage of crashes only to those wild teenage boys we hear so much about. And it's the seniors who are more likely to die.

This is an emotional and politically charged subject which families and politicians are loath to address so as not to offend parents or potential voters. While not as dangerous as some might believe, statistics do show increases in accidents with aging and a higher level of injury, death and damage claims. Free transit for seniors can only help alleviate that situation by providing a dignified and very affordable alternative to driving.

The simple cost of each accident in policing, ambulance and administrative costs is probably around \$900 depending on where and when it happens. The insurance costs vary from \$3,000 to \$15,000 depending on the property or personal injury nature of the claim. The Canada wide economic impact of accidents may be as high as \$19.5 billion per year. Getting seniors out of their cars and onto the buses will improve road traffic safety and reduce potential automobile accidents with all the horrendous human and fiscal costs involved in them.

Section 5 - Responses from Other Stakeholders

Burlington for Affordable Sustainable Transit (BFAST):

BFAST is supportive of and indeed applauded most of BSAC's positions in the paper as a far sighted and important addition to the future of transit in Burlington. Points of agreement include:

1. "A well-funded, efficient and constantly improving transit system that better serves the needs of seniors will better serve the entire city."
2. "That we must not wait for improvements in ridership before making a commitment to better transit."
3. "Return at least 30% of the Gasoline Tax for transit - to provide some of the long-term financial resources required to build the transit system."
4. "Your strongest argument is in demolishing the logic of so-called "business cases" that our City Council seems to demand from every initiative. We too believe that this thinking is a barrier to making our city a better place and BSAC has expressed itself forcefully on this issue."
5. "Your economic analysis of the benefits of transit is also very helpful."

One area where BFAST had reservations was "*The concept of community buses ...there are advantages to this type of service, not least of which is service to malls. However, Burlington made a move to smaller buses some 25 years ago. These buses were not as durable as the standard 40-foot buses, required much more maintenance and had a significantly shorter service life.*"

BSAC notes BFAST's support for this type of service while raising concern for the reliability of smaller buses. In our conversation with BFAST we agreed that reliability and warranty on all kinds of automotive and transport vehicles has advanced tremendously in the 25 years since Burlington Transit's last experiment in small buses and suggests that given the success of small buses servicing HSR low load routes, small bus community service routes is a philosophy well worth revisiting.

BFAST was supportive of the concept of free off-peak transit for seniors but posed the possibility that the "Free Mondays" might be an easier sell. BSAC position is that "Free Mondays" and "Free Off-Peak" provide almost the same number of hours per week but the economic, environmental and congestion benefits of getting people on buses for a period of every day outweigh the "Free Mondays" option.

Burlington Transit:

Burlington Transit's response was somewhat disappointing. While they were supportive of all the positions that advocated for increased funding they were mute on the larger economic, environmental, road safety and congestion aspects of the paper. They were dismissive of ideas for getting more seniors and people on the buses. They confused our positions on bus sizes for community routes comparing 40 foot to 30 foot buses while BSAC compared 40 foot buses to 15 to 25 seat buses. This has been clarified in our paper.

Transit was also contradictory about the cost of Free Off-Peak Transit for seniors. BSAC estimates the cost in lost revenues as between **\$48,500** per year and **\$72,750**. In an email collecting the data on costs, Mike Spicer, Director of Transit agreed that the cost would probably be less than **\$100,000** but expressed concern that Free Off-Peak Transit for seniors might prove so popular as

to be difficult to rescind after a trial period. BSAC's position is that it is precisely this level of popularity that will create all of the economic, environmental, road safety and congestion benefits.

Burlington Transit's response also provides some confusing accounting bringing already sunk costs into the argument to suggest that the cost would actually be \$1.46 million resulting in fare increases for everybody else to recover \$541,000. BSAC feels this gross exaggeration may scare other transit users, taxpayers and city council.

Integrated Transportation Advisory Committee (ITAC):

Given that ITAC is a committee devoted to transportation/transit issues, their response was very professional and as expected somewhat technical in its language and approach. They are supportive of all of the service and frequency improvements contained in the BSAC position and go even further in the funding improvements sought by BSAC, supporting a return to 70/30 funding immediately and the phasing in of a ratio more favorable to transit over a five year period. While noncommittal on the issue of free off peak, weekdays transit for seniors they do seek "innovative ways be determined to increase ridership in the upcoming Burlington Transit Master Plan." On community service bus frequency and return of small bus services to major malls, they suggest these are ideas worthy of further analysis.

The ITAC response is provided below in its entirety:

1. **Improving transit for all Burlington residents and stakeholders:** "ITAC endorses overall improvements to public transit for all residents of Burlington. ITAC supports a comprehensive, inclusive, reliable and safe transit system that promotes and benefits all residents and stakeholders."
2. **Improved transit frequency and reliability:** "ITAC supports consideration of City policies, programs and budget enhancements that improves the convenience, reliability and frequency of transit service."
3. **The use of smaller transit vehicles** "THAT Burlington Transit undertakes the necessary investigation and analysis in order to make the decisions regarding the introduction of smaller transit vehicles into their fleet. ITAC further recommends that this investigation and analysis includes the possibility of alternative fuel sources for sustainability and environmental considerations."
4. **Off-road transit services on private property:** "THAT Burlington Transit and other City staff work with current and future developers of retail properties or other appropriate developments to incorporate transit terminals or hubs onto their designs."
5. **Transit routes to support transit users and other stakeholder's quality of life:** "ITAC supports the upcoming Burlington Transit Master Plan including the development of transit routes to meet the needs of transit users and stakeholders to service a wide variety of destinations within the City to enhance their quality-of-life."

6. **Frequent, reliable and convenient transit service:** “ITAC recommends that the upcoming Burlington Transit Master Plan focuses on the provision of frequent, reliable, convenient and safe transit service in order to increase ridership for all residents and stakeholders rather than the provision of free transit. ITAC further recommends that innovative ways be determined to increase ridership in the upcoming Burlington Transit Master Plan.”
7. **Transit Funding opportunities:** “ITAC recommends investigation and analysis of a variety of funding sources and opportunities to support and enhance transit service including the use of the City’s Gas Tax revenue stream with a 70/30 split or better (for Transit). ITAC further recommends consideration of a phased-in approach whereby the ratio would be increased in favour of transit over the next 5 years or other short term future time period to support the goals and objectives of the Burlington Transit Master Plan.”

Overall, ITAC supports the goal of reducing the use of single-occupant automobiles as the main transportation mode and that residents consider transit and active transportation alternatives for the majority of their trips. City Council has approved a 25 year strategic plan that encourages economic growth, intensification, an enhanced increased transportation network including connectivity and environmental leadership – a more reliable, convenient, sustainable and environmentally friendly transit supports the strategic vision of council.

ITAC further supports the new transportation directions and vision endorsed by City Council and looks forward to these elements being included in the upcoming Burlington Transit Master Plan.

BSAC thanks BFAST, ITAC and Burlington Transit for their comments and have modified some of our positions in the light of those comments.

Section 6 - Acknowledgements

A work like this cannot be undertaken without lots of help. City councillors, staff, volunteers and other interest groups gave most generously of their time to talk. The generosity of council members and professionalism of their staff and city staff in general is appreciatively acknowledged and our thanks gratefully offered.

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Mandy Newnham, Supervisor, Adult Programming, Parks and Recreation.

Jim Thurston, Chair BSAC

Jim Young, BSAC member

Bonnie Purkis, BSAC member

Brian Helstrom, BSAC Advocacy Sub-committee member

Shobha Ahuja, BSAC Advocacy Sub-committee member

Section 7 - Sources and Data

A work like this cannot be undertaken without research, reading, data and extrapolation. Some of the sources, figures and extrapolations are noted below:

Environmental Protection Agency, USA	City of Burlington web pages
Statistics Canada	Burlington Strategic Plan 2016 to 2040
Metrolinx	Burlington budget documents
Hamilton Street Rail	Burlington Public Library
Burlington Transit	Province of Ontario
Burlington City Council	Halton Region
Age Friendly Burlington	The Globe and Mail
The Toronto Star	ITAC (Integrated Transportation Advisory Committee)
Burlington Post	BFAST (Burlington for Accessible Sustainable Transit)
Hamilton Spectator	

Some Numbers and Extrapolations:

Population 2015	185,000	Projected 2040	195,000(Cap)	Pos. 230,000
Seniors 2015	33,000	Projected 2040	43,000	
Percentages	17%	Projected 2040	22%	

Number of seniors' bus journeys in 2015: 191,757 (includes Handi-Van)

Transit revenue from seniors' journeys: \$339,436

Transit Daily Operating Hours	5 a.m.- 1 a.m.	20 hours/day	140 hours/week
Transit Off-Peak Hours (Monday to Friday)	10 a.m. – 3 p.m.	5 hours/day	20 hours/week

Estimate of lost revenue cost of free transit for seniors in off peak hours:
 $20/140\text{ths of } \$339,436 = \text{Revenue Reduction of } \$48,490$

Estimate is dependent on level of uptake and changes in seniors' transit usage patterns. Assuming that 50% of current seniors travel is in weekday, off peak hours, that revenue loss may grow to \$72,736 if weekend and peak-time seniors' travelers change their habits. This additional cost will come with added benefits of reduced rush hour congestion, pollution and CO2 emissions.

Current ridership funding from gasoline taxes - \$2,150,000
 Total Burlington ridership journeys - \$3,120,000
 Seniors ridership journeys - \$191,757
 Ridership subsidy per journey - \$0.69
 Increase in funding if seniors' journeys up 50% - \$66,070
 Increase in funding if seniors' journeys double - \$132,140

Seniors population of 33,000 of whom 67% are couples means approximately 22,000 senior households. Car ownership remains high among seniors, many households have 2 cars some have none it is reasonable to assume there are 22,000 cars belonging to seniors are currently in use in Burlington.

Cost of owning a car in the GTHA for 1 year from Toronto Star/ Globe Mail articles: \$5,000