



**City of Kingston
Environment, Infrastructure & Transportation Policies Committee
Meeting Number 01-2024
Minutes**

**Tuesday, December 12, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.
Hosted at City Hall in Council Chamber**

Committee Members Present

Councillor Cinanni, Chair
Councillor Amos
Councillor Chaves
Councillor Hassan
Councillor Stephen

Regrets

Councillor Tozzo

Staff Members Present

Justin Bromberg, Project Manager, CAO's Office
Soren Christianson, Project Manager, Climate Leadership
Lanie Hurdle, Chief Administrative Officer
Brad Joyce, Commissioner, Infrastructure, Transportation & Emergency Services
Matt McCombs, Project Engineer, Parks & Shoreline
Derek Ochej, Deputy City Clerk
Christine O'Connor, Committee Clerk
Julie Salter-Keane, Manager, Climate Leadership
Neal Unsworth, Manager, Parks & Shoreline

Others Present

Councillor Oosterhof

This is not a verbatim report.

Meeting to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Councillor Stephen
Seconded by Councillor Chaves

That the agenda be approved.

Carried

Confirmation of Minutes

Moved by Councillor Hassan
Seconded by Councillor Stephen

That the minutes of the Environment, Infrastructure & Transportation Policies Committee Meeting Number 03-2023 held Tuesday, August 1, 2023, be approved.

Carried

Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest

There were none.

Delegations

There were none.

Briefings

There were none.

Business

a) Rural Transportation Study Update for Kingston and Neighbouring Municipalities

Mr. Bromberg introduced the report.

Councillor Amos asked whether staff knew the percentage of working individuals from Gananoque commuting into Kingston. He asked for a definition of a flexible route. Mr. Bromberg stated that he does not have that percentage but can refer to the consultants that collaborated with staff on the study to get that information. Ms. Hurdle added that the interest from individuals in Gananoque was based on a need to attend appointments in Kingston or accessing entertainment and recreation services rather than commuting for work as was seen primarily in Loyalist and South Frontenac Townships. Mr. Bromberg defined flexible route as a route with a flexible schedule and flexibility in pick up and drop off points, whereas a fixed route would operate on a fixed schedule with fixed points.

Councillor Amos asked if the revenue projections in the breakdown of costs over a five-year period found in table three of the report are based on high engagement, low engagement, or an average over the five-year timeframe. Mr. Bromberg explained that the consultant used more conservative numbers to calculate this projection based on projects in other communities. Ms. Hurdle added that this report came to the Committee as an information report as there are still many details to be worked out. She mentioned specifically that of the three Councils in discussion on this project, two are supportive of the proposed routes while one Council is contemplating the routes presented. She noted that changes to the routes would impact costs of implementation and projected revenue.

Councillor Amos asked whether routes had been combined as table one and table two from the report proposed a different number of routes. Ms. Hurdle clarified that the routes were not combined, adding that table one offers two route options for Loyalist Township to choose.

Councillor Amos noted the recommendation in the report to hire a third-party contractor to run the routes. He asked whether Kingston Transit had the ability to run these routes. Mr. Joyce stated that Kingston Transit does not currently have the capacity to run the routes.

Councillor Amos noted that the estimation of 0.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) seemed light considering there could be three active networks throughout four different municipalities. He added that the report stated a position for this program would be embedded into the staff for Kingston Transit and asked if this was accurate. Mr. Joyce confirmed that the position would be with Kingston Transit to provide the most efficiency at the service level. He added that 0.5 FTE was based off of what the consultants have observed from operators of similar rural networks.

Councillor Amos expressed understanding for the regional approach but asked if the cost would be shared equitably amongst the municipalities involved. Ms. Hurdle responded that the financing model had not been finalized, and the City has been clear that they are not willing to cover the majority of the cost if Kingston residents do not make up the majority of residents being serviced. She added that there is work to do on the transit system within the City's urban boundaries that must be considered first.

Councillor Stephen asked why this exercise was run out of the Chief Administrative Officer's office and not Transportation Services. Ms. Hurdle explained that the decision to run this project out of the Chief Administrative Office was made due to changes in the portfolio for Transportation Services, as well as the Chief Administrative Officers for the partnering municipalities being involved.

Councillor Stephen echoed the concerns regarding citizens within Kingston's city limits still not having access to transit routes. She asked if a different recommendation would be made if staff were to focus solely on providing transit to the Countryside District. Mr. Joyce stated that if they were to look at transit for that area in isolation, a lot of the data compiled by the consultants for this exercise would be useful because it took demand and different scenarios into consideration. He added that additional work and information would be required to predict the outcomes for transit in rural Kingston areas.

Councillor Stephen asked for confirmation that two discussions could be had, one based on the regional approach presented in the report, and one considering rural transit in Kingston. Ms. Hurdle confirmed that there is potential for rural transportation outside of the regional approach presented and reiterated that much of the information in the study used for the regional approach would be valuable in the consideration of a different model. She stated that running a regular bus through the rural area would not be the most efficient approach and added that other options such as the addition of more park and ride locations could be considered.

Councillor Stephen asked if Loyalist Township would be the first municipality the City would want to partner with considering that municipality has Gas Tax funding that must be used in the next year. Ms. Hurdle confirmed that Loyalist Township seems the most prepared to move forward with a transportation plan noting that in addition to the Gas Tax funding there was other funding they had received that they would potentially apply to this project.

Councillor Stephen asked if stakeholders had been directly consulted to assess that the length and frequency of the routes presented would allow transit service to meet the needs of places like the Islamic Centre of Kingston, Little Cataraqui Creek,

Conservation Area or Rideau Acres Campground. Mr. Bromberg stated that the Islamic Centre of Kingston was consulted thoroughly, however, he was unsure whether the other stakeholders mentioned were consulted for this project. He added that the other groups referenced may have participated through the public survey that was distributed and stated that he would confirm whether they had been consulted.

Councillor Stephen asked for confirmations specifically for the Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area as equity to greenspace access has become a significant discussion. She asked if this project could contribute to modified work opportunities for City employees. Mr. Joyce explained that there is a possibility transit driver positions could become modified work opportunities depending on the modifications required and the vehicle being used.

Councillor Chaves expressed support for the initiative, but noted he also had concerns, specifically regarding the 0.5 FTE. He stated that full-time would be required in the beginning to run the initiative correctly. He asked what happened to the on-demand program. Mr. Joyce explained that the service was provided through Kingston Access Services and that over time the demand for the service had diminished to the point that the service stopped.

Councillor Chaves asked if the initial projected cost for the program includes startup costs such as new busses. Mr. Joyce stated that the costs in the proposal include an agreement that would have the contractor carry the burden of the capital cost of the busses. He added that there is an option for the municipality to purchase the busses and be responsible for servicing them, but he stated that this was not preferred by staff.

Councillor Chaves asked if other government funding could be used to purchase the busses. He asked if this would reduce the costs for the operator, the municipality, and residents. Mr. Bromberg explained that there is a capital program open through Infrastructure Canada for the design and planning phase of the project, which included the purchase of a fleet to operate the service. He added that additional costs that would be included in a contract if the City were to contract the service out would cover staffing and fleet operations.

Councillor Chaves asked if Kingston Transit had returned to pre-pandemic ridership levels. Mr. Joyce confirmed that Kingston Transit is operating at approximately 86% of their pre-pandemic ridership levels.

Councillor Chaves asked if there are any urban areas within Kingston that do not have access to Kingston Transit services. Mr. Joyce stated that Westbrook is the only primary urban area lacking transit services.

Councillor Chaves asked if the City is still having difficulties hiring bus drivers. Mr. Joyce confirmed that there continue to be difficulties with hiring bus drivers which has contributed to the slow return to pre-pandemic levels of service.

Councillor Chaves expressed concern for the difficulties in staffing drivers and the potential negative impact that staffing for these routes may have on hiring Kingston Transit drivers. He referred to Exhibit 3.2 of the report in which the Muskoka community minibus is referenced multiple times. He added that the City of Kingston's experience with minibuses in the past had not been successful. He further asked what impact this would have on service in the rural area. Mr. Joyce explained that the negative experience Kingston Transit had with minibuses was due to significant mechanical issues and ongoing high operating costs. He stated that one of the detractors of a minibus from staff's perspective would be the inability to use a minibus as a reserve vehicle.

Councillor Chaves asked if specialized transit was already in place through Kingston Access Services and asked if Kingston Access Services had already been contacted. Mr. Joyce confirmed that Kingston Access Services does provide this service in Kingston currently. Ms. Hurdle added that Kingston Access Services does not necessarily serve Gananoque, South Frontenac, or Loyalist. She noted that if the regional service is provided, an equivalent accessible service would need to be provided. She stated that she was unsure whether Kingston Access Services would have the capacity to serve the territory as they are still unsure whether some of the municipalities involved would be interested in moving ahead with implementation of the program.

Councillor Chaves asked if the project is estimated to be environmentally sound. Mr. Bromberg stated that the consultant projected there to be no measurable environmental benefits to this service within the first five years of implementation. He added that this may change if ridership grows or if service were to expand.

Councillor Hassan asked how much this project would cost the City. He inquired if potential contractors were contacted to ensure they would be ready to provide the service. He mentioned local taxi companies and asked if there are enough accessible taxi plates to provide equitable services. Ms. Hurdle stated that costing would depend on the formula that is agreed upon, which has not yet been established. She noted that they have not approached any companies yet, as there is still a lot of work to do. She added that there are not currently enough accessible taxis and that more information on this topic would be brought back to Council.

Councillor Hassan asked if a Providence Care route was included. Mr. Joyce stated that Providence Care was not included in this report but would be included in a report that will be brought forward at the end of the second quarter of 2024.

Councillor Oosterhof asked who would make the final decision on this type of project. Ms. Hurdle explained that the final decision would be made with each municipality's Council. She added that the City of Kingston could choose to look at a model that captures solely its own rural area but that there may be an advantage to looking at combined efforts.

Councillor Oosterhof asked if there is a fund that might drive this project initially and if there are enough funds for a three-to-five-year pilot. Ms. Hurdle stated that based on the consultants' report there are limited options for funds and grants. She added that trying to work with Loyalist and new companies coming to their area such as Umicore could be an option for appealing to the provincial government for funding.

Councillor Oosterhof asked about the strategy around the bus routes, and if there had been consideration for a basic rural route. Mr. Joyce stated that this report does not contemplate a basic Kingston rural route. He added that the transit report coming to Council at the end of the second quarter of 2024 may include a rural route like the one Councillor Oosterhof is suggesting but that staff are still in the initial phase of this report.

Councillor Oosterhof asked if the implementation of more park and ride locations have been considered. Mr. Bromberg confirmed that park and ride opportunities were a key strategy identified as part of the research for this project. He added that there were approximately 12 potential park and ride locations identified through this study.

The Chair offered Committee Members the opportunity to ask additional questions.

Councillor Chaves expressed concern for the safety of residents waiting at bus stops on the side of rural roads. He asked what consideration has been made for safety on rural roads. Mr. Bromberg stated that the consultant has highlighted that additional work would be required by the municipalities to confirm the feasibility of the stops and identify the appropriate locations. Mr. Bromberg returned to the point about capital funding. He stated that Infrastructure Canada does provide funding for capital infrastructure such as bus stops and not only to the purchase of vehicles.

Councillor Chaves expressed that his main concern for this program would be the City of Kingston bearing an inequitable amount of financial responsibility for the expansion.

Councillor Amos asked who oversees the distribution of subsidized bus passes and how the distribution of the passes takes place with four municipalities. Ms. Hurdle explained that the suggestion in the current report is to not yet have an integrated system with Kingston Transit because there are challenges to work through with different municipalities and different approaches. She added that the proposed fee would be based on where a rider is leaving from and where their destination is.

Councillor Amos asked whether this program would put the City in jeopardy for the gas tax funding that is currently received. Ms. Hurdle confirmed that the revenue from the gas tax fund would not change, but it might impact how the City chooses to spend gas tax funding.

Councillor Amos reiterated the concern for the City of Kingston bearing the majority of the financial burden and not receiving the majority of the benefits.

Councillor Oosterhof asked if there was something in the report that indicated Kingston would bear the brunt of the financial responsibility for the program. Ms. Hurdle explained that there was a review of best practices, specifically in Ontario based on a county approach. She added that the funding for this program would be split between the different parties and the report provides different funding models. She stated that funding will still need to be determined with the partnering municipalities.

Councillor Stephen thanked staff for their work on this project.

Councillor Hassan thanked colleagues for their questions and reiterated some concern but stated that he would like to wait for the next report on this project. He expressed appreciation for the work of staff on this project.

The Chair provided an opportunity for members of the public to ask questions. There were no members of the public present.

b) Information Report, Council Priority 2.1.4C – Species Protection Measures for Capital Projects

Mr. Unsworth introduced the report.

Councillor Stephen asked if Councillors are approached with questions, who they should address with those questions. Mr. Unsworth stated that if a question is related to a particular project, there is a project portal that lists the project manager's name and that person would be the best point of contact. He added that general questions related to procedure can be addressed to the Director of Engineering Services or to himself.

Councillor Amos asked if the City would normally consult with the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority (CRCA) on capital projects with potential impacts. Mr. Unsworth confirmed that the CRCA would normally be consulted if work is done in a flood plain or set back a certain distance from a water body. He added that typically a permit from the CRCA would be required.

Councillor Amos asked if this document is duplicating a process that is already being done. Mr. Unsworth explained that the procedure is not intended to replace any obligations as a municipality but to provide an internal procedure for mitigating impacts to species at risk when decisions that fall into a grey area need to be made on capital works projects. Mr. Joyce added that the purpose is to solidify that any of these projects need to consider species at risk and these protocols.

Councillor Chaves asked whether this would only apply to municipal projects. Mr. Unsworth explained that this is an internal City of Kingston procedure for staff to follow for municipal projects.

Councillor Chaves asked if the procedure could be used for private projects as well. Mr. Joyce stated that private projects have not been contemplated in this report. He added that a planning perspective would be needed to consider implementing this standard operating procedure for private projects.

Councillor Chaves asked whether deer, coyotes and foxes would be included in this report. Mr. Joyce stated that this is specific to species at risk but added that other species are considered by staff in their projects.

Councillor Hassan asked if there would be enough people in the Kingston area qualified to follow this protocol so that there would not be significant delays in capital projects. Mr. Joyce explained that this procedure would lend itself to additional costs and additional time on projects. Mr. Unsworth added that most of the procedure outlined in the report is current best practice, so there would not be significant changes to how capital works projects are proceeding at present. He stated that the procedure is using a holistic approach across City projects.

Councillor Hassan asked what the biggest challenge to implementing these recommendations is. Mr. Unsworth stated that a lot of the knowledge around species at risk is newer information from the last five years. He added that sharing that knowledge internally is the solution to that challenge.

The Chair provided an opportunity for members of the public to ask questions. There were no members of the public present.

c) Potential to Extend the Better Homes Kingston Program

Mr. Christianson introduced the report.

Councillor Stephen asked if the report that will be brought to the Committee in Q3 2024 will have a recommendation for the fee structure. Mr. Christianson clarified that the report is scheduled for Q3 2024 and that it would include fee options based on research from other leading jurisdictions.

Councillor Stephen mentioned the disconnect between tenants and landlords as the tenants often pay for utilities and would care about efficiency, while landlords may not as it does not directly impact them. Mr. Christianson stated that this is a nuanced issue and other municipalities are considering tenant focused programs. He added that landlords can participate in the Better Homes Kingston program and there are programs that are focused on energy efficiency for rental properties. He confirmed that there are no current programs for in-depth retrofits initiated by tenants. Ms. Salter-Keane added that staff would be looking at extending the multi-residential program by 2026 as one of Council's Strategic Priorities. She noted that a report on that issue could be expected in 2025.

Councillor Amos mentioned his support of the program and asked if there is a safety mechanism for the City if a tax bill doesn't get paid. He asked if the loans being given are matching the lifespan of the devices being purchased. Mr. Christianson confirmed there is a loan-loss reserve provision in the program backed by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM). He explained that the lifetime of the financing is equal to the lifetime of the equipment.

Councillor Chaves commented that he supports the project and that he has noticed a huge response from the public. He asked whether there was still a waitlist. Mr. Christianson confirmed there is still a waitlist. Councillor Chaves expressed uncertainty over whether the list of people who want to participate in the program has been exhausted. He asked whether the threshold for age of homes that could be included in the program could change. Mr. Christianson stated that while there are 500 projects targeted in the pilot phase, that is only a fraction of the theoretical potential of the program. He added that homes built after 1991 are still eligible to participate if they have the potential to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions or if they heat with electricity. Ms. Salter-Keane added that there has been an uptake in the numbers on the waitlist even with no marketing done for the program. She stated that the unused marketing funding could be used at a later date to do targeted marketing in areas that have not had an uptake.

The Chair provided an opportunity for members of the public to ask questions. There were no members of the public present.

Motions

There were none.

Notices of Motion

There were none.

Other Business

There was none.

Correspondence

There was none.

Date and time of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Environment, Infrastructure & Transportation Policies Committee is scheduled for February 13, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

Adjournment

Moved by Councillor Stephen
Seconded by Councillor Hassan

That the meeting of the Environment, Infrastructure & Transportation Policies Committee adjourn at 7:54 p.m.

Carried