



TOWNSHIP OF EDWARDSBURGH CARDINAL ACTION ITEM

Committee: Committee of the Whole – Administration & Operations

Date: February 10, 2025

Department: Administration

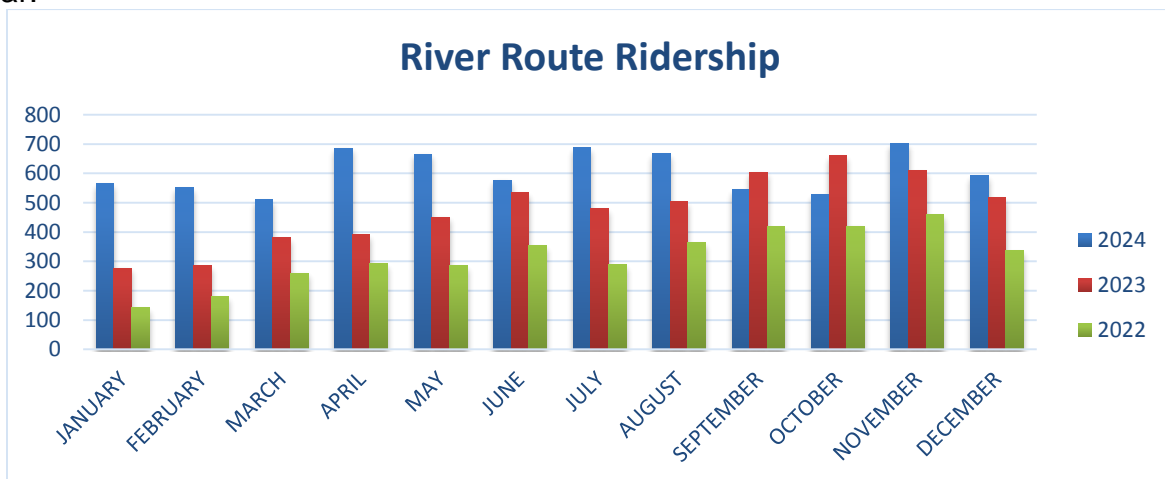
Topic: 2024 River Route Transit Report

Purpose: To review the 2024 revenue/expenses, proposed 2025 draft budget and recommend renewing the partnership agreement for the upcoming period between April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026.

Background: The River Route Transit Service Partnership Agreement between the Township of Augusta, City of Brockville, Township of Edwardsburgh Cardinal, and the Town of Prescott requires a yearly review by the partners to affirm their commitment to renew the agreement.

The information contained below is meant to assist in evaluating the River Route Transit Service.

Ridership on the River Route increased 28% in 2024 with a total ridership of 7,277. Total ridership in 2023 and 2022 was 5,694 and 3,805 respectively. The initial ridership target set for the River Route when it began in 2021 was to get to 25 daily riders. The River Route service surpassed this target in 2024 – averaging 29.3 daily riders for the year.



In 2024 the City of Brockville modified their policy to allow Youth 14 and under to ride for free; prior it was five and under. This policy change extended to the River Route. With the change, the number of Youth rides increased to 350, which was previously 94 and 36 in 2023 and 2022. Staff reported an increase in high school students using the River Route to get home after High School extra-curricular activities (e.g. sports practices, club meetings) that extend after school bus hours.

The City of Brockville is in the process of installing Automated Vehicle Location (AVL) devices on all buses, including the River Route. It will allow for recording time and location of riders getting on and off the bus. This data will allow for better route planning and understanding of ridership patterns moving forward.

Policy Implications: The partnership agreement expires on March 31, 2025. The agreement requires each partner municipality to provide written notice by February 28 of their intention to either renew for the upcoming 12-month period or their wish to terminate participation in the agreement. A copy of the partnership agreement is attached.

Strategic Plan Implications: Aligns with the strategic pillars of Liveable Community and Good Governance. 1.1 - seek out opportunities with neighbouring municipalities and organizations to enhance the community living experience and 2.3 - ensure that services delivered are effective and efficient

Financial Considerations: Each of the three municipalities contributed \$30,000 for the 12-month period which was sufficient to cover the operating costs for 2024. A contribution from each municipality of \$30,000 for 2025 will be sufficient to cover the operating costs. Our contributions in prior years were covered through the modernization reserve fund however this fund is now used up.

The cost share for each municipality for 2024 is \$4,067 lower than budgeted due to increased ridership revenue and fuel costs being lower than expected. The success of the River Route Transit Service is measured on the concept of continuous improvement in decreasing the cost per ride. Cost per rider will be calculated by taking the total operating expenses of the River Route Transit Service and dividing by the number of rides provided for the applicable period of time. In 2022 the cost per ride was \$43.20. The increase in ridership in 2023 resulted in a decrease in the average cost per ride to \$29.90. A further increase in ridership in 2024 has decreased the estimated cost per ride to \$22.93.

The 2025 Budget has been developed accounting for inflation increases in costs with an overall aim to increase ridership by 5%.

The table below provides the financial results to December 31, 2024 and draft 2025 budget.

	2024 Total	2024 Budget	2025 Budget	2023 Total	2023 Budget	2022 Total
Revenue						
Bus Fares	29,438	25,996	30,910	25,239	20,220	19,258
EOLC Pilot Funding	-	-	-	-	-	-
Provincial Gas Tax (Est.)	71,516	78,086	75,695	72,970	74,271	71,553
Augusta	21,972	26,040	23,339	24,018	26,270	25,382
Edwardsburgh Cardinal	21,972	26,040	23,339	24,018	26,270	25,382
Prescott	21,972	26,040	23,339	24,018	26,270	25,382
Total Revenue	166,870	182,200	176,621	170,262	173,300	166,956
Expenses						
Salaries	110,873	119,900	116,416	115,027	116,400	113,008
Fuel	34,805	42,000	38,285	37,162	40,000	38,090
Maintenance	14,518	18,800	15,244	17,904	15,400	14,660
Tickets, Signs, Prog	6,675	1,500	6,675	170	1,500	1,197
Total Expenses	166,870	182,200	176,621	170,262	173,300	166,956
Ridership						
Total Rides	7,277	4,058	7,641	5,694	4,058	3,865
Operating Days	248	252	250	249	252	252
Rides per Day	29.34	16.10	30.56	22.87	16.10	15.34
Continuous Improvement Measurement						
Cost per Ride	22.93	44.90	23.12	29.90	42.71	43.20

Additional Considerations for 2025

The use of a spare bus from the City of Brockville made it possible to get the River Route Transit Service off the ground. The City of Brockville typically replaces buses on a 6-year lifecycle. The River Route has been using a bus slated for replacement for a 7th year when it would typically be disposed. 2025 will be the final year that Brockville will have a bus available to extend one additional year, with no replacements scheduled before 2028. The Federal government has a Rural Transit Solutions Fund grant program targeting transit service servicing populations smaller than 50,000. The grant will cover up to 80% of the cost of buses and shelters.

Council could consider supporting and contributing to the Town of Prescott application submission to the Rural Transit Solution Fund that, if successful, would provide a dedicated bus for the River Route service. Up to an additional \$12,000 would be required to cover our portion of the new bus if successful. There is already \$18,000 in

reserve from each municipality at the end of 2024. The estimated cost of the bus is \$180,000. The asset would be the Town of Prescott's.

The Ontario Transit Infrastructure Fund is a provincial grant used to support the start-up and growth of transit projects. Projects must expand service to unserved areas or close a demonstrable transit gap to be eligible. The Town of Prescott will be exploring this funding option for expanding hours of service and/or route locations and returning with details for consideration.

Alternatives: Council could decide to not proceed with continuing to support the ongoing operation of the River Route System which would cease operation on March 31, 2025.

Recommendation: That Committee recommends that Council: 1) Renew the River Route Transit Service Partnership Agreement for the upcoming period of April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026; and 2) Direct staff to work with the Town of Prescott staff to explore funding options to support a new bus purchase and expanded hours of operation and return with details for consideration; and 3) Include our portion (upset of \$42,000) into the 2025 budget and cover the expense through general taxation.



Director of Operations