

Transit service extends to Waterdown in June '08

Dianne Cornish

Published on Dec 21, 2007

After a hiatus of 15 or more years, city bus service from Waterdown's urban core to the Aldershot GO Station will return next year.

Hamilton councillors approved the plan to re-institute the bus route last month on a recommendation from the city's transit division. The enhanced service carries an annualized operating cost of \$343,000 and capital costs of \$880,000 to cover two conventional transit buses and two transit employees. Because transit is an area-rated service, there will be a 1.5 per cent hike on the average residential property tax in Waterdown's urban core, equating to about \$50 a year.

Increased fire protection instituted in Waterdown this year will also have an impact on next year's taxes, resulting in a 1.4 per cent increase, or an additional \$55 per year, from Waterdown and area residents. All town residents and some of their rural counterparts will be affected by the hike.

Flamborough councillor Margaret McCarthy supports the move to provide transit service in Waterdown.

"It was one of the number one priorities identified as being needed," she said referring to the findings of Hamilton's Provincial Gas Tax Transit Steering Committee, which identified Waterdown as being an underserved area with no transit service within its urban boundaries.

"I see it (the new bus route) as a necessary component to service the community and meet demands," McCarthy said, adding that the service will evolve as the community grows.

Andy McLaughlin, supervisor of transit planning with HSR (Hamilton Street Railway), said the new route will be offered beginning Monday, June 23. It will initially operate Monday through Friday during morning and afternoon peak time periods, providing five runs from 5:30 to 8:30 a.m. and six or seven runs between 5 and 8 p.m. It will provide service for the urban portion of Waterdown, between Dundas Street and Parkside Drive, east of Hwy. 6.

Buses will travel north-south on Waterdown Road, terminating at Plains Road in Burlington, with direct service to the Aldershot GO/VIA station. There will be connections at the station to downtown Hamilton, downtown Burlington and the Burlington GO station. There will also be a loop service provided from Mill Street west along Dundas Street to the big-box stores at Clappison's Corners, then north along Hwy. 6, east along Parkside Drive, south down Evans Road, back onto Dundas Street and finally west to Mill Street before proceeding southward along Waterdown Road to the GO station.

Transfers to and from the HSR to Burlington Transit will be free of charge, allowing riders to travel to destinations in either Hamilton or Burlington.

McLaughlin said the buses will travel 30 minutes apart to allow riders to plan their route without having to travel to Burlington if they want to get from east Waterdown to the west end of town. Riders can disembark at Mill Street and transfer to a bus traveling back into Waterdown from the Aldershot station. There's even a bus check number (905-527-4441) that riders can call, prompting an automated responder to tell them what time the next bus will arrive at their stop if they key in the four-digit route number shown on the sign at their bus stop.

The introduction of all-day GO service to the Aldershot station earlier this year prompted the move to establish a Waterdown bus route, McLaughlin said.

Establishing the Waterdown route, along with a run serving south Hamilton Mountain, expands transportation options in the city, something called for in Hamilton's GRIDS study. It also fits in nicely with the city's Transportation Master Plan which has a target of doubling ridership on Hamilton buses by 2031, significantly reducing the number of car trips each year,

There is also a trend toward inter-modal service which encourages bus riders to make connections to trains or other modes of travel. Once riders reach the GO station, they have a number of choices; they can transfer to Burlington Transit to reach destinations in Burlington or Hamilton, they can take the GO bus into Toronto, the VIA Rail or even Amtrak that runs daily from the station to New York City.

McLaughlin said the new bus service will also open up opportunities for travel for bike riders in the area. Cyclists can travel down to Waterdown from Carlisle or other rural areas, board the bus and head for the Aldershot GO station or points beyond. Buses in both the Hamilton and Burlington transit services are equipped with bike racks.

The 2008 HSR enhancement is an introductory, starter service, intended to meet immediate needs. If ridership levels increase, consideration will be given to expanding service levels, perhaps adding more weekday or Saturday runs to the schedule.

<http://www.flamboroughreview.com/news/article/144281>