

Region of Waterloo
Engineering and Environmental Services
Design and Construction

To: Planning and Works Committee
Meeting Date: January 16, 2024
Report Title: Conestoga College Transit Hub – Approval of Design Concept

1. Recommendation

That the Regional Municipality of Waterloo take the following actions with respect to the proposed Grand River Transit (GRT) Hub at Conestoga College Doon Campus in the City of Kitchener as outlined in report EES-DCS-24-001, dated January 16, 2024:

- a) Approve the Recommended Design Concept for the Conestoga College Transit Hub as set out in Appendix A; and
- b) Increase the Consulting Services Agreement with Arcadis Professional Services (Canada) Inc. to provide engineering consulting for detailed design, contract administration, and site inspection services for the proposed Conestoga College Transit Hub in the City of Kitchener by \$357,000 for a revised upset limit total of \$590,100 plus applicable taxes, with construction contract administration and inspection to be paid on a time basis.

2. Purpose / Issue:

Approval of this report will allow for the design and construction of a new transit hub at Conestoga College Doon Campus.

3. Strategic Plan:

The proposed transit hub at Conestoga College supports the Region's Strategic Plan priority area for Climate Aligned Growth and Equitable Opportunities and Services. This project will expand equitable public transportation networks across the region and make it easier for people to get around and make climate-friendly choices.

4. Report Highlights:

- During the latest public consultation held in October 2023, 55% of respondents expressed support for the new transit hub and 18% of survey respondents indicated concerns about traffic on Doon Valley Drive.

- Conestoga Students Inc., the student association representing over 22,000 students at Doon campus, has also expressed support for the project (Appendix C). Conestoga College students have voted in support of a universal transit pass (U-Pass) program with GRT that, subject to Regional Council approval, will launch September 1, 2024 (TSD-TRS-24-002).
- Construction is planned to start in Spring 2025 with completion by the end of 2026.
- This project is funded by the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) including a 40% contribution from the federal government and a 33.33% contribution from the provincial government. Council approval is necessary to proceed with detailed design and construction in order to meet the timelines outlined in the Transfer Payment Agreement for the ICIP funding.
- An increase to the Consulting Services Agreement is required to complete the detailed design for this project due to changes made to the design concept since the start of the project. Based on actual costs incurred to date and the scope of the recommended design concept, there are insufficient funds remaining within the current approved upset fee limit of \$233,100 to complete the detailed design for the revised design concept. In accordance with Purchasing By-law 22-034 section 21, an assignment can be extended if it proves to be cost effective or beneficial to the Region. Extension of this assignment with Arcadis Professional Services (Canada) Inc. will be cost effective and beneficial to the Region. Therefore, staff recommends an increase of \$357,000 plus applicable taxes to Arcadis Professional Services (Canada) Inc.'s consulting assignment for a revised total of \$590,100 plus applicable taxes to complete the detailed design for this project. Construction contract administration and inspection is to be paid on a time basis.

5. Background:

A Recommended Design Concept was presented to Committee of the Whole on August 11, 2020 (Report TES-DCS-20-17) and on June 22, 2021 (Report TES-DCS-21-20). Delegations in attendance raised concerns about the additional bus traffic along Doon Valley Drive that would result from the proposed transit hub location.

The Committee previously asked staff to approach Conestoga College to consider alternative locations for the transit hub, and whether the existing campus roadway could be used as the entrance to the new transit hub location, with buses exiting via Doon Valley Drive. After further discussion amongst senior staff at the Region and the CAO at Conestoga College, the College has confirmed that they do not support the long-term use of the campus roadway for GRT bus routes. The College again expressed concerns about impacts to their campus master plan, conflicts with deliveries, traffic congestion on campus, and disruption to their existing infrastructure along the campus roadway. GRT also does not support using the campus roadway due to impacts on bus

operations and subsequent delays incurred, increased operating costs, the lack of space to provide an adequate waiting area for the current College population and offer proper customer amenities (i.e. shelters).

In order to ensure that the concerns of local residents, students, and other stakeholders were fully considered, Region and consultant staff have revised a number of aspects of the proposed design for this project. In order to proceed with the recommended design concept, additional design effort and cost will now be required.

6. Communication and Engagement with Area Municipalities and the Public

Area Municipalities:

City of Kitchener staff were consulted as part of the initial site plan application process and about impacts to Doon Valley Drive. Staff are supportive of the report recommendations. The City has plans to resurface Doon Valley Drive in advance of the project.

Staff at Conestoga College were consulted on the proposed bus routing, and were included on the Project Team during the selection of the recommended location for the stops. The proposed transit hub is located entirely on Conestoga College property and implementation will ultimately require a licence agreement with the college to permit construction and operation of the facility on college lands.

Public:

Public consultation included two occasions (March 2020 and October 2023) where project information was posted to the Region's EngageWR website and residents were asked to provide feedback. An in-person public meeting was held on February 25, 2020. Letters were delivered to property owners within the adjacent area at various stages of the project to provide project information and engagement opportunities. Engagement information was also included on signs placed on Doon Valley Drive and on campus. Staff attended pop-up events at the College in September 2023, in co-ordination with the College U-Pass initiative, to ask for feedback on the project.

The main themes of the comments raised by the public during the latest round of public engagement include:

- 55% of survey respondents expressed support for the new transit hub
- Concerns about increased traffic, noise and air pollution along Doon Valley Drive from the increased number of buses passing by the residential community located at 350 Doon Valley Drive
- Requests to consider alternative locations for the transit hub

The Conestoga College Students' Association sent a letter of support for the project, provided in Appendix C.

In response to the comments received from the public, a traffic study, noise study and air quality assessment were undertaken as part of the background studies for this project. The traffic study demonstrated little impacts to the traffic operations along Doon Valley Drive due to changes in bus routes. An increase in transit availability is part of the solution to the existing traffic congestion in the area. The findings from the noise study indicate that no noise mitigation is required to meet standards. The Air Quality Assessment indicated that the overall air quality in the area will not be significantly impacted by the proposed bus routing.

Alternative locations closer to the Homer Watson Boulevard and Conestoga College Boulevard intersection, as suggested by the public comments, are not central to the campus and offer a much longer walking distance for students. A number of alternate parking lots were considered, but these locations resulted in similar or longer walking distances to other areas on campus. Finally, there is insufficient space for all routes to stop at Door 3, which has the highest number of boarding and alighting passengers, so some routes continue to use the Door 6 location, which is not centrally located.

The proposed location for the transit hub in Parking Lot 6 allows for more efficient operation of buses serving the campus and improved amenities at the transit hub for passengers. The proposed location also maintains a relatively short walking distance to Door 3, and positions the transit hub adjacent to a proposed campus expansion that is planned to contain a new student life centre.

Letters/emails providing notification of this Committee Report were sent to local residents and stakeholders, including any contacts that previously provided comments on the project.

7. Financial Implications:

The Region's approved 2024-2033 Grand River Transit Capital Program includes a budget of \$1,000,000 in 2024 and \$5,100,000 in 2025-2026 for the Conestoga College Transit Hub (project #66095) to be funded from the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) (73%, \$4,453,000), the Transit Capital Reserve (16%, \$976,000), and the Transit Regional Development Charge Reserve Fund (11%, \$671,000). This budget is sufficient to fund the increased design costs.

8. Conclusion / Next Steps:

Subject to Regional Council approval of the Recommended Design Concept, the project will proceed to detailed design and site plan approval, with construction planned to begin in Spring 2025 and be complete at the end of 2026.

9. Attachments:

Appendix A: Recommended Design Concept and Renderings for the Conestoga College Transit Hub

Appendix B: Existing and Proposed Bus Routing at Conestoga College

Appendix C: Letter of Support from Conestoga College Students' Association

Prepared By: Michelle Pinto, Engineer, Design and Construction
Skylar Van Kruistum, Head, Design and Construction

Reviewed By: Phil Bauer, Director, Design and Construction

Approved By: Jennifer Rose, Commissioner, Engineering and Environmental Services

Rod Regier, Acting Commissioner, Transportation Services

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-  ASPHALT TRAILS
-  CONCRETE SIDEWALK
-  LANDSCAPE AREA
-  BUS PLATFORM (CONCRETE)
-  CANOPIES/SHELTERS
-  BIKE RACK



DRAWING SCALE = 1 : 500









Attachment B – Existing and Proposed Bus Routes



Appendix C: Letter of Support from Conestoga College Students' Association

Nelson Chukwuma
Conestoga Students Incorporated (CSI)
Room 2A106
299 Doon Valley Drive
Kitchener, Ontario
N2G 4M4

September 27, 2023

Michelle Pinto, Project Manager
Region of Waterloo
150 Frederick St
Kitchener, Ontario
N2G 4J3

RE: Support for Conestoga College Bus Stop Changes

Dear Michelle Pinto,

On behalf of Conestoga Students Inc., the official student association of Conestoga College representing over 22,000 students at our Doon campus, I would like to express our support for the proposed improvements and enhancements to the transit facilities at the Conestoga College Doon Campus in the City of Kitchener. We believe these enhancements will greatly benefit our students, the local community, and the environment.

In particular, we commend the inclusion of the following features in the proposed plan:

1. **On-Demand Heating and Real-Time Schedule Screens:** The addition of on-demand heating and real-time schedule screens will greatly improve the overall transit experience for our students. These amenities will not only provide comfort during inclement weather but also ensure students have access to accurate and up-to-date information, making their commute more efficient.
2. **Covered Shelters with Bike Storage:** The inclusion of covered shelters, along with a dedicated area for bike storage, addresses the diverse transportation needs of our student population. It encourages using sustainable transportation options while protecting valuable assets like bicycles from the elements.
3. **Thoughtful Placement:** Placing the transit station away from roads and residential neighbourhoods demonstrates a commitment to minimizing noise and environmental impact while aligning with the Region's sustainability goals. This thoughtful placement contributes to a harmonious coexistence with our neighbours.

Overall, we believe that the proposed improvements and enhancements will not only assist with the flow of traffic on campus, enhance safety for students traveling to and from their classes, but also create an environment that is respectful of the surrounding neighbouring community. Furthermore, these enhancements align with our shared commitment to promoting eco-friendly transportation choices.

Given the increase in student ridership already being seen,¹ these improvements are key to the continued partnership between all involved parties.

In addition to the proposed plan, we encourage the Region to explore further sustainable design considerations, such as integrating solar panels or other green energy options to support the future electric charging spaces, as well as the heating and real-time screens. In addition, we encourage the Region to include charging stations in the covered bike/scooter area, to support the use of e-devices.

CSI appreciates the opportunity to offer input regarding these proposed improvements and enhancements, and looks forward to continuing to work with the Region of Waterloo, GRT, and all other stakeholders to improve public transit infrastructure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nelson Chukwuma". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Nelson Chukwuma
President

¹ Grand River Transit, "GRT Sets New Ridership Record," Grand River Transit, September 14, 2023, <https://www.grt.ca/Modules/News/index.aspx?feedId=bbee2b8e-91b6-4696-8c3d-481dbf28de8e,24b9d7cd-762a-4496-ad74-4e816cb9adc8,d23e5a74-6488-4978-9740-594267f59ea8,38cb3425-641c-49a2-a83b-f03081ea8431,31820c97-a4b0-4704-ab8b-7c088247077a,69a9e0f5-98d5-4bcc-8f1e-5537cb4c997b>.