

GRT Business Plan engagement

Engagement principles and strategy

The Grand River Transit (GRT) Business Plan engagement strategy displays our commitment to collaboration with our customers, Area Municipalities, stakeholders, and partners. By using a variety of approaches, we aimed to enhance community involvement and transparency in the plan's development.

The output of this engagement was a Business Plan that was influenced, shaped and directed by residents from across Waterloo Region that is reflective of the community's current and future transit needs.

Highlights

The Business Plan was based on community-driven priorities, identified through:

- Approximately 2,500 responses to GRT surveys
- More than 450 ideas contributed to a service map
- Held 12 dedicated workshops with key stakeholders and hundreds of participants
- Hosted and attended more than 30 events across the Region, with pop-up sessions held at transit stations
- Partnered with the Region's Public Health's Neighbourhood Nursing team to hear new voices in each municipality
- Ride-alongs on MobilityPLUS and conventional bus routes to promote survey submission and have surveys filled out onboard
- Transit staff engaged through workshops and in-person sessions
- Additional engagement sessions held for the MobilityPLUS and Kiwanis Transit Plan and Township Transit Strategy to ensure specific perspectives were represented

Engagement summary

Business Plan engagement included multiple phases of engagement with the public and key contributors:

- **Phase One (Summer 2024):** Introducing the project and identifying the community's transit priorities.
- **Phase Two (Fall 2024):** Collecting public feedback on the preliminary transit investment plan priorities.
- **Phase Three (Winter 2025):** Presenting the Plan's recommendations to contributors and decision-makers.

Throughout Phase One and Two, GRT reached out to partners, staff, contributors, and customers to hear their transit investment priorities and ideas. GRT heard from people at transit stations, talking to riders on MobilityPLUS, neighbourhood events, virtual town halls, two rounds of online surveys, idea maps and Q&A sessions.

Phase One provided public input on high-level themes and priorities. Phase Two included service proposals, and feedback from the public focused on whether the proposals were consistent with community priorities.

Engagement was supported by a wide-ranging communications and marketing campaign that included: newspaper and digital ads, social media, handouts, posters, digital displays, audio and visual announcements at stops and stations, stakeholder emails, e-newsletters, website alerts, recordings on phone lines, online booking bulletins, media releases and signage.

Through social media, including X, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn, we reached more than 180,000 people and had more than 6,000 engagements.

Social media	Reach	Engagements
Business Plan	78,072	2,609
Township Transit Strategy	86,812	3,079
MobilityPLUS and Kiwanis	15,740	378
Total	**180,624**	**6,066**

Table 1. ***Social media engagement summary***

Business Plan engagement tactics

GRT carried out a comprehensive engagement plan throughout 2024, encompassing more than 300 staff hours of work in the community.

- GRT established an engaged network by hosting more than 12 stakeholder workshops and additional presentations to identify, refine, and learn more about the proposed transit priorities. Contributors included representatives from:
    - Area Municipalities, school boards, all Region Departments and GRT business units, TravelWise workplaces and employees, Waterloo Region Economic Development Strategy, Workforce Planning, Immigration Partnership, Grand River and Cambridge Accessibility Advisory Committees, Older Adults Network, Children and Youth Planning Table, Region of Waterloo Youth Advisory Group, U-Pass Working Group, Town and Gown Committee, service providers and agencies, REDI, Non-Profit Leaders, Healing of Seven Generations, and the K-W Urban Native Wigwam Project

- Phase One and Two each began with a virtual townhall, including a presentation by project leads with the opportunity for attendees to ask questions. Recordings of each townhall were shared following the session.
- The Engage Waterloo Region platform served as a hub for information about the Business Plan project, questions, and surveys.
- GRT hosted pop-up sessions at transit stations, including The Boardwalk, Waterloo Public Square, Ainslie Terminal, and Fairway Station. Staff handed out information, heard people's questions and encouraged customers to fill out surveys.
- GRT partnered with the Region of Waterloo Public Health Neighbourhood Nursing team, which provides information and health services to underserved neighbourhoods, to hear new voices and transit ideas from residents in each municipality.
- Grand River Transit staff were engaged through all-staff townhalls and in-person events, as well as a series of outreach sessions in GRT lunchrooms in November and December 2024.
- GRT engaged the public at other events and activities throughout 2024, including the ION 5th birthday celebrations, Pride festivals, Active Living Fairs and U-Pass outreach sessions.
- Feedback was also gathered through GRT's existing feedback channels, including SFCC calls, social media comments and messages, and email.

In addition to the Business Plan engagement activities outlined above, GRT undertook special engagement activities for the MobilityPLUS and Kiwanis Transit Business Plan, and for the Township Transit Strategy.

MobilityPLUS and Kiwanis Transit Plan

- The project team sought to understand the experiences of diverse groups of existing and future MobilityPLUS and Kiwanis Transit customers, including people with disabilities, caregivers, older adults, agencies, the Specialized Transit Service Committee, Grand River and Cambridge Accessibility Advisory Committees, and the public.
- Targeted consultation was completed for the MobilityPLUS and Kiwanis Transit plan, reaching people with disabilities who use the service and those who don't, as well as caregivers and service organizations.
- Community pop-ups were held at the Waterloo Rec Centre Community Complex, Community Living Cambridge Franklin Centre and Grand River Hospital. A Business Plan presentation was also provided to KW AccessAbility.
- Virtual sessions held with KidsAbility, Grand River Hospital and Reception House.
- Ride-alongs were used as an opportunity to get survey responses from existing customers while onboard MobilityPLUS vehicles.
- The project team took measures to ensure that during the two rounds of engagement people were able to share feedback in ways that were comfortable and accessible to them, including in writing, through signed language, in person in the community, and virtually.

Township Transit Strategy

- GRT launched the Township Transit Strategy in spring 2023 with kickoff meetings to identify the local values, needs, issues, and concerns known to senior township staff. This included identifying possible contributors, key employers, and high-value locations for potential transit service expansions or enhancements.
- Four township-specific virtual engagement sessions were held in summer 2024 to introduce the project and solicit feedback through a public survey.
- Staff completed public outreach in each of the townships at local libraries and farmers' markets.
- In the fall, a second round of engagement launched with events hosted in each township including Wellesley Rec Complex, Breslau Community Centre, New Hamburg Community Centre, and North Dumfries Community Complex. A second public survey gave the public the opportunity to share feedback on the revised proposals.
- GRT staff also attended Neighbourhood Nursing locations in the townships, including at the Wellesley Recreation Centre, Woolwich Memorial Centre, Ayr Curling Club, Heritage Park Community Centre, and Linwood Community Centre.

More information

Visit grt.ca/BusinessPlan for more information.