

Region of Waterloo

GRAND RIVER TRANSIT

GRT Business Plan

Proposed plans and strategies

Town Hall - November 2024

Agenda

- Welcome!
- Zoom Town Hall Information and Recording
- Territorial Acknowledgements
- Project Team Introductions
- GRT Business Plan Initiative Recap
- Walkthrough Proposed Plans and Strategies
  - Conventional (Bus and Train)
  - MobilityPLUS and Kiwanis Transit
  - Township Transit Strategy
- Next Steps
- Q&A session
- Closing comments



Territorial acknowledgments

- The Region of Waterloo is situated on the lands within the Haldimand Treaty of 1784, a formally ratified agreement acknowledging six miles on either side of the Grand River as treaty territory belonging to Six Nations of the Grand River.
- The Region of Waterloo serves an area within the traditional territories of the Anishinaabe, Chonnonton and Haudenosaunee peoples. This territory is within the lands protected by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum.
- We acknowledge the enduring presence, knowledge and philosophies of Indigenous Peoples. We acknowledge the continuing accomplishments and contributions Indigenous Peoples make in shaping Waterloo Region.

Business Plan Initiative Recap

Project Team Introductions

- **Business Plan Leadership Team**
  - Blair Allen, Manager
  - Pat Morabito, Manager
  - Neil Malcolm, Acting Director
  - Doug Spooner, Acting Commissioner

- **Conventional (Bus and Train) Plan**
  - Kevan Marshall, Project Manager

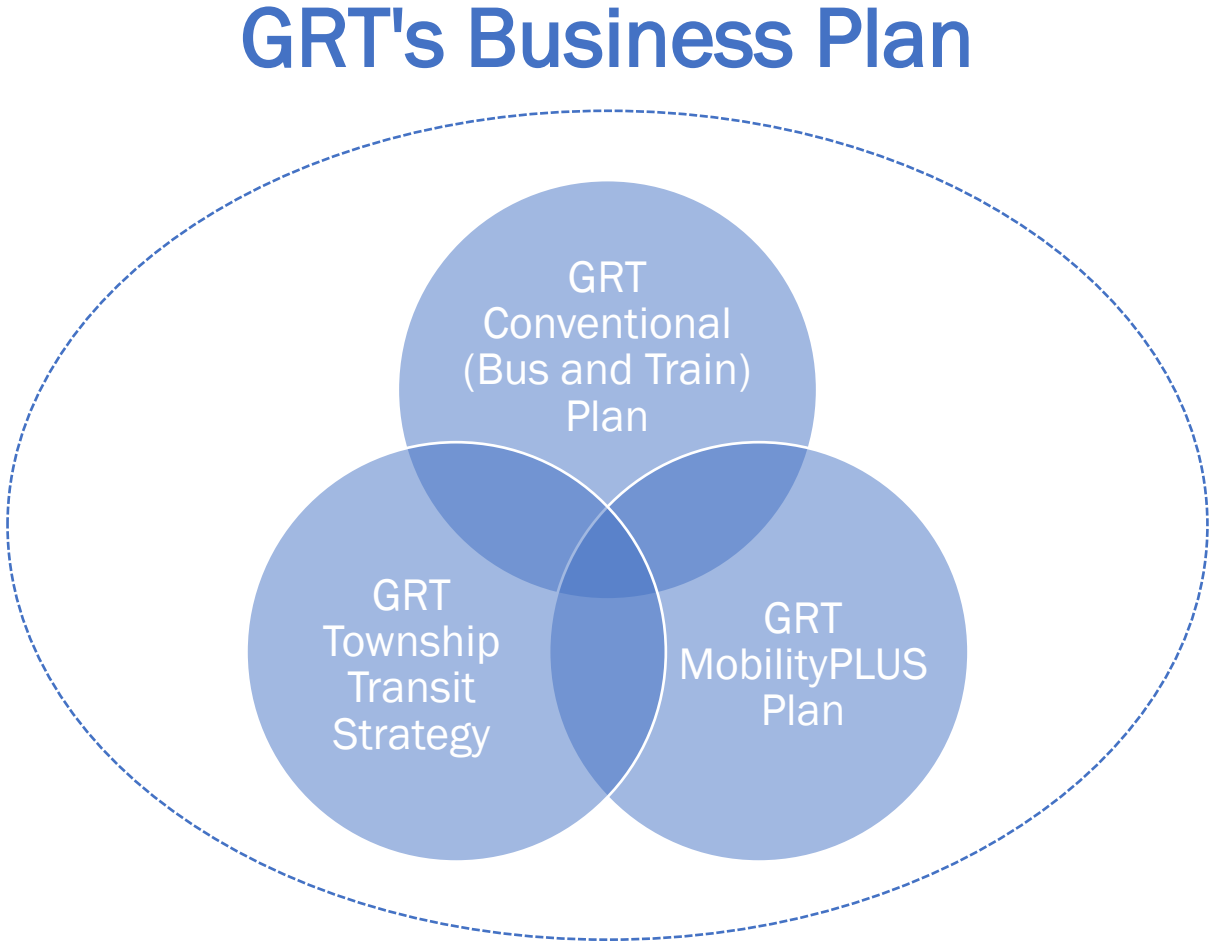
- **MobilityPLUS and Kiwanis Transit Plan**
  - Ben Singer, Assistant Manager

- **Township Transit Strategy**
  - Adam Fraser, Principal Planner
  - Chantelle Thompson, Supervisor

GRT Business Plan

Make transit the easy first choice for more people throughout Waterloo Region

- How can we make transit easier to use?
- Where and when can GRT serve the community better?
- How and where GRT should prioritize frequency and speed?

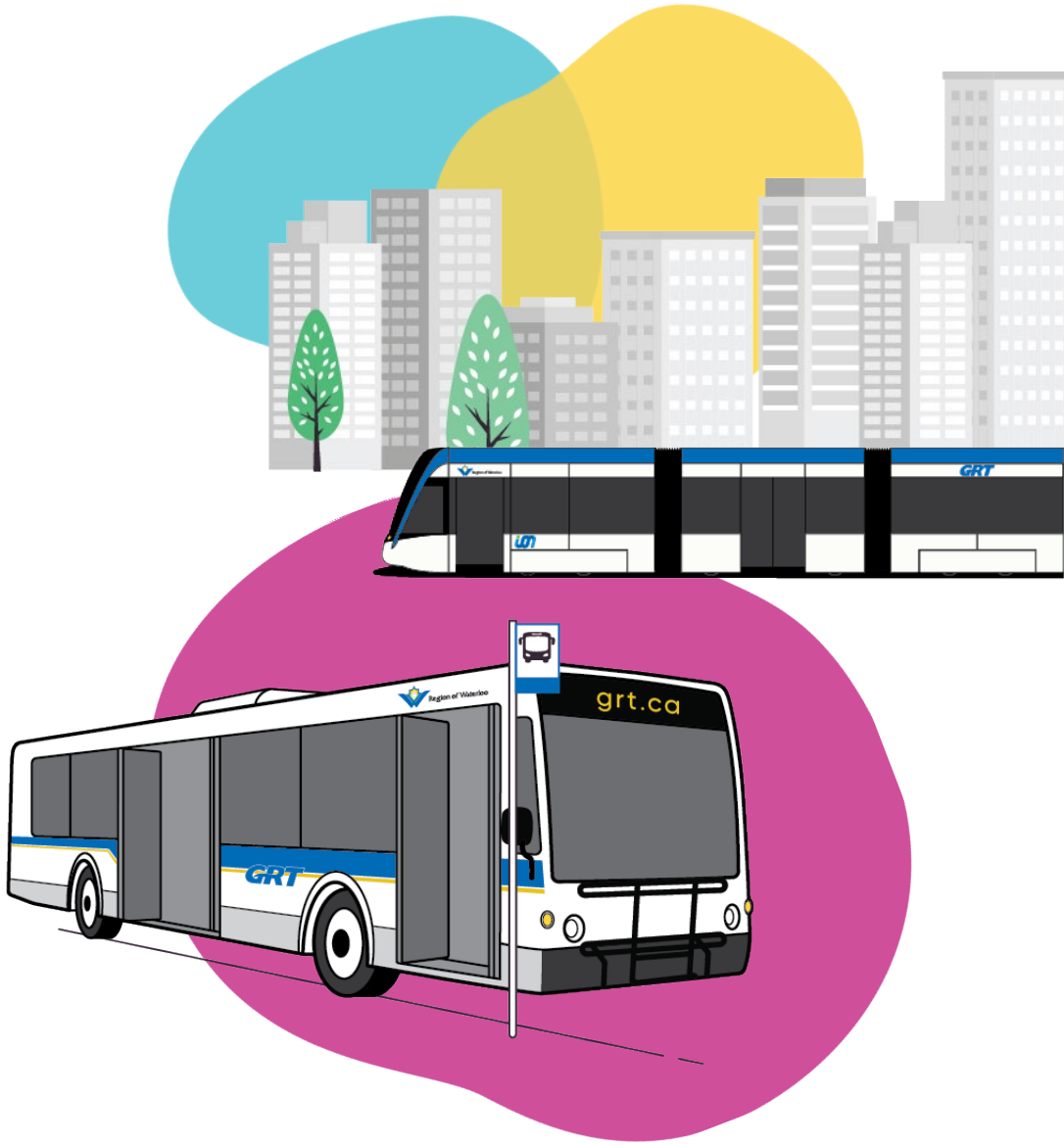


Conventional Bus and Train Plan

Bus and Train Plan

Project Purpose:

- Guide transit investments to:
  - Achieve the Region's commitment to community climate action;
  - Respond to growth; and
  - Align GRT services, policies, and programs to the Region's Strategic Plan



What we heard

- During the first phase of public consultation, over 1,000 residents and visitors engaged at stations, neighbourhoods, events, and online

Focus on **accessibility and equity**

Transit needed for many **inter-municipal** trips

Importance of **Township** connections

More **off-peak** and **weekend** service

Enhance **stop infrastructure**

Increase service for **new and growing communities**

Need for reliable **overnight** transit service

More **frequency** on key routes

Strategic priorities

- Drawing from the Region's Strategic Plan priorities, technical reviews and public consultations, we identified five strategic priorities for the Conventional Bus and Train Plan:



Frequency



Speed



Customer-Driven Innovation



Strategic New Coverage



Simple and Intuitive

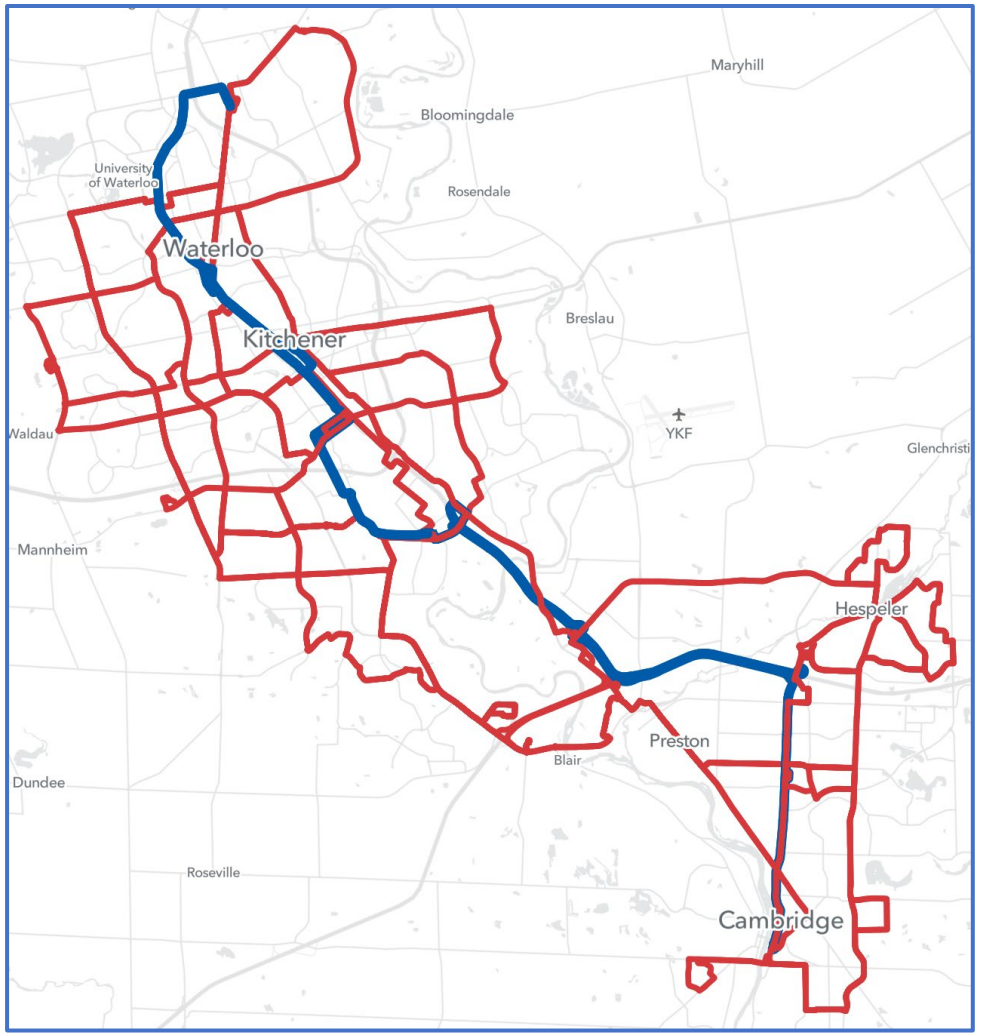
Transit investment priorities

- GRT's proposed transit investment priorities would help achieve the strategic priorities identified by riders, the community, GRT, and the Region

Frequent Transit Network	10-min service weekdays 7am-7pm, and 15-min service all other times, on 16 key routes
Strategic New Coverage	Strategic expansion focused on new growth areas and streamlined routes for useful improvements to coverage
Consistent Schedules	Enhance frequency to make schedules more consistent all-day, so more transit trips are more equitable and intuitive for more riders
Highway Express	Frequent and rapid single-seat service between Cambridge, Kitchener, and Waterloo
Overnight Network	24/7 service on key routes, with 30-minute overnight frequency

Frequent Transit Network

- **10-minute frequency** weekdays from 7am-7pm
  - 15-minute frequency during all other times
- Frequent buses on **16 routes** to align with 301 ION LRT frequencies
  - Routes 301, 302, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 7, 8, 12, 16, 20, 51, 53, 61
- Connections along the Central Transit Corridor and key terminals to **improve transfers**
- **Riders will save an average of 6 minutes** in wait times during peak hours and **8 minutes** during off-peak hours



Strategic New Coverage

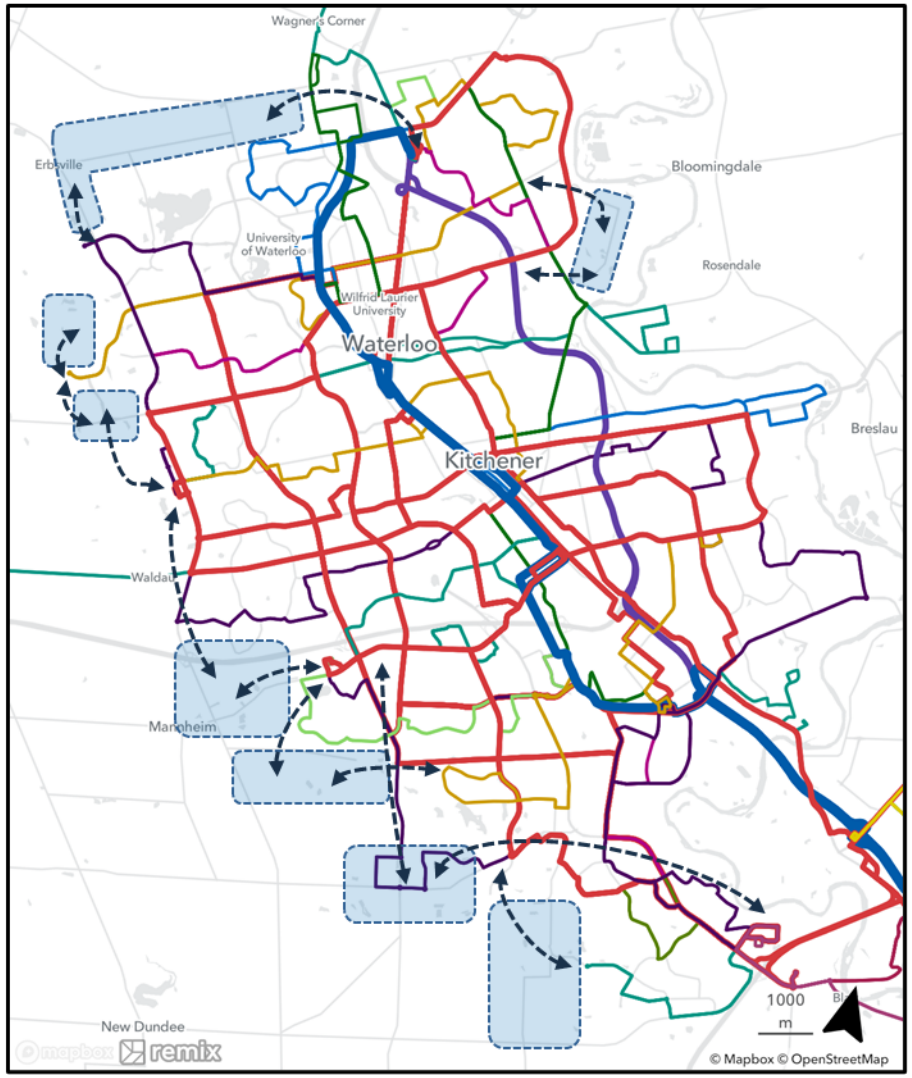
- **New routes and route adjustments** will be introduced to improve GRT's coverage of new areas as the bus fleet grows
- **Riders will gain access to new or improved services** on key corridors near their neighbourhood and workplace
- GRT will focus on:
  - Serving **new growth areas**
  - **Streamlining routes** on major corridors
  - **Reducing overlapping coverage** where applicable
  - Serving **areas of high equity need**
  - Responding to **ridership demand**

- **Key focus areas include:**

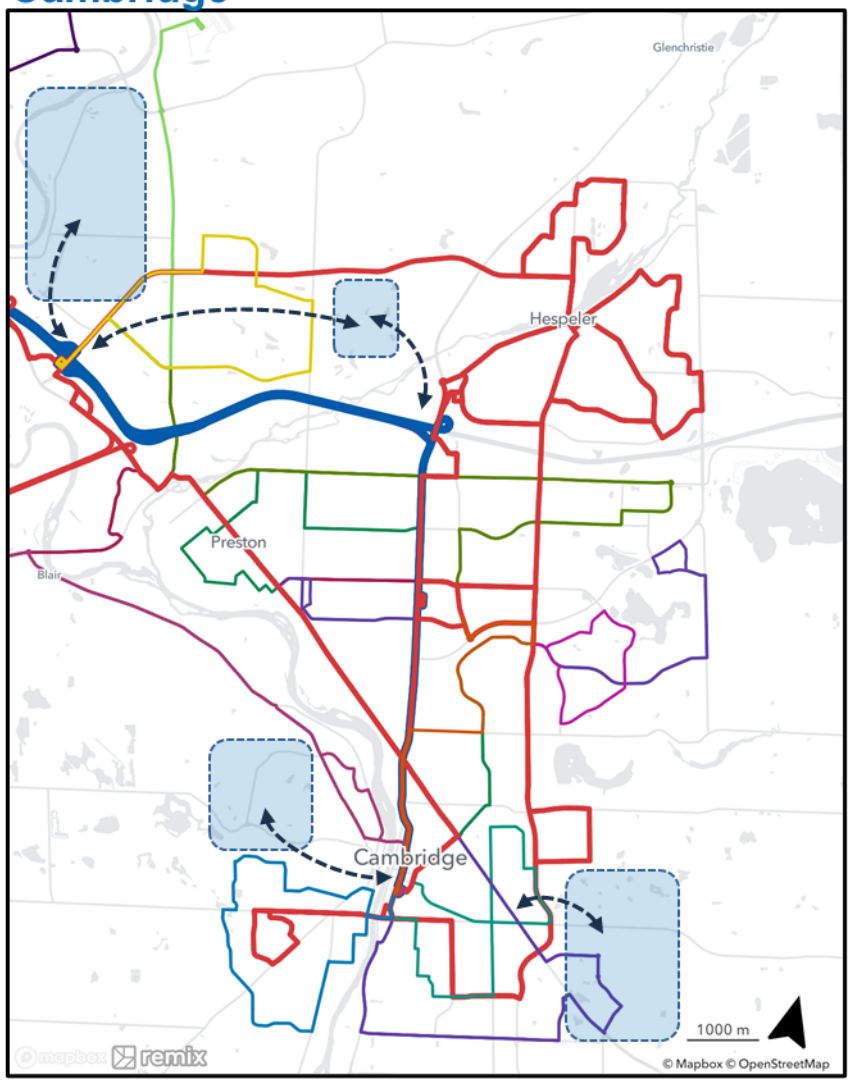
1. **Cambridge Industries**
2. **Southwest Kitchener**
3. **North Waterloo**

Strategic New Coverage

Kitchener and Waterloo



Cambridge

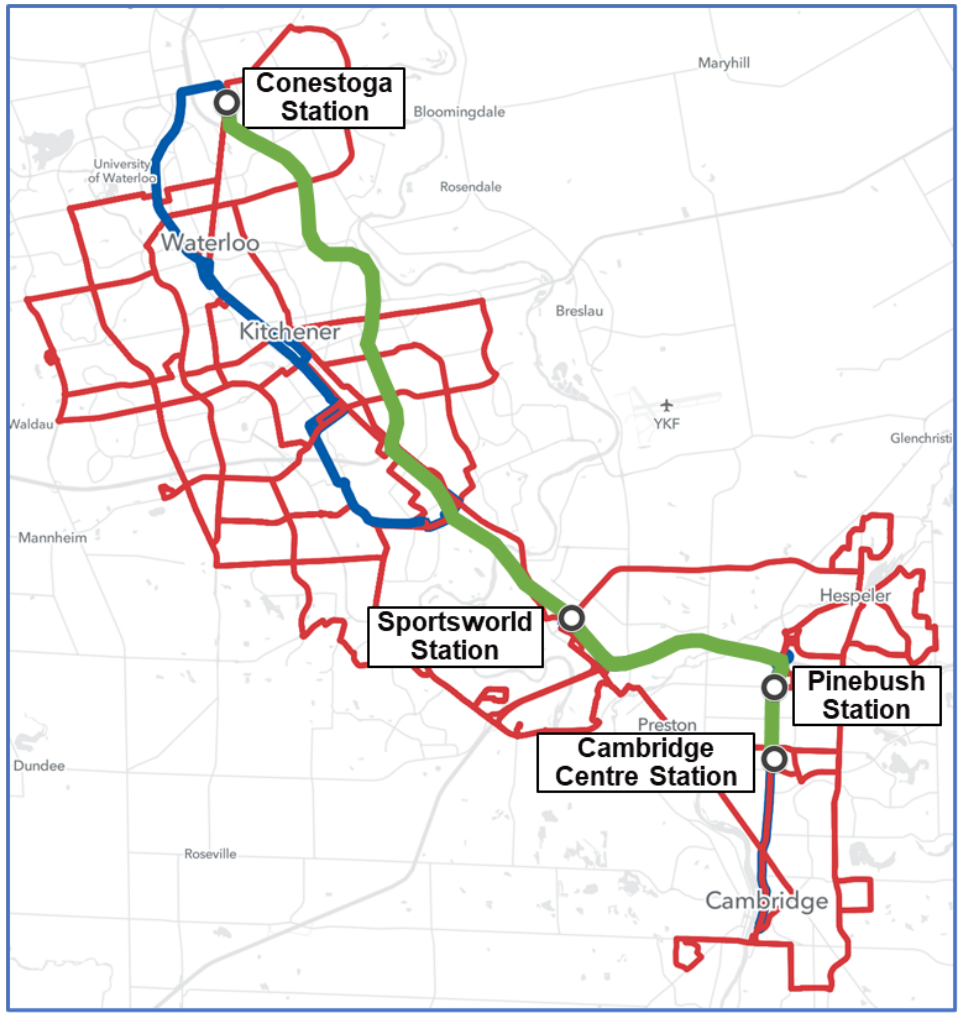


Consistent Schedules

- Make schedules more consistent all-day with **frequency improvements** on many local routes
  - Reflects community shift away from "9 to 5" commutes
- GRT will focus on **time-based equity** improvements:
  - Improved evening schedules
  - New and improved weekend service
  - More consistent schedules all day during the weekday as the GRT bus fleet grows
- **Riders will enjoy more consistent travel times and improved transfers**, all day, every day

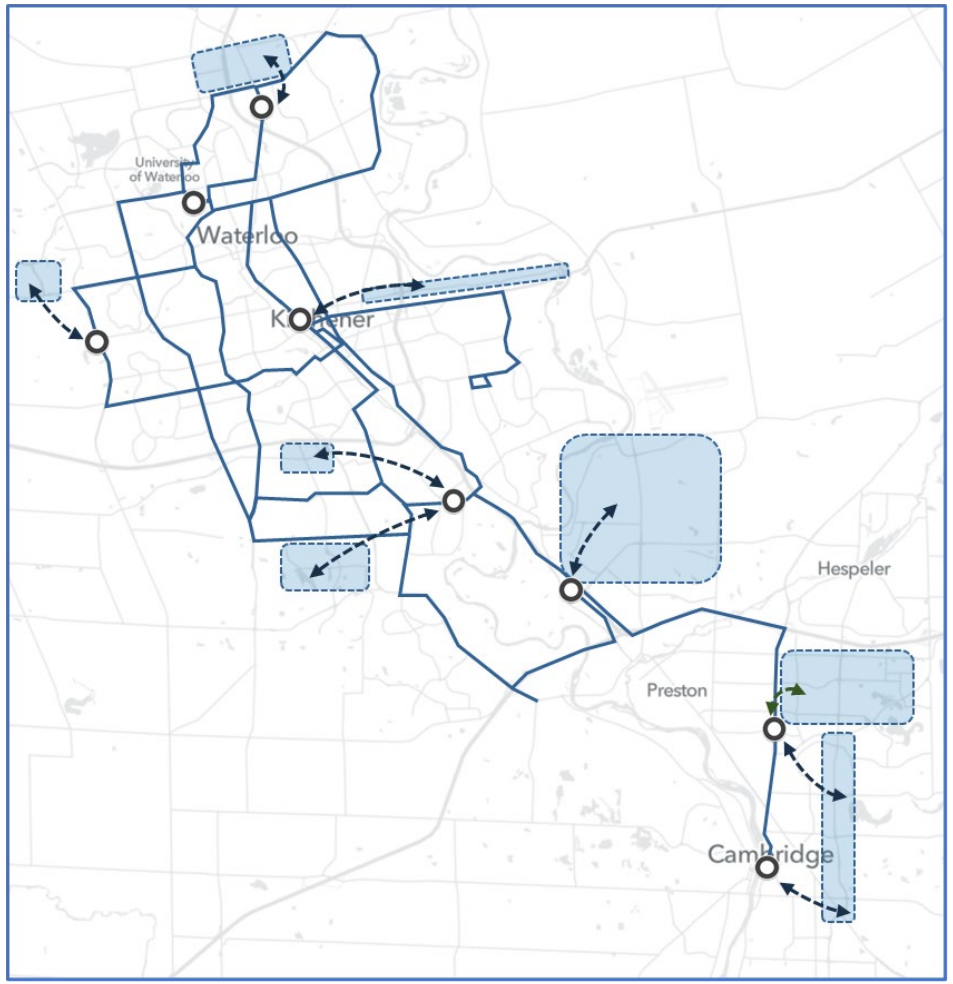
Highway Express

- The Highway Express is a proposed limited-stop super-express service that **connects the tri-cities**
  - **15-minute** all-day, all-week service
  - **4 stops with connections to each community**
    - Conestoga, Sportsworld, Pinebush, and Cambridge Centre Stations
  - Transit travel times become **more competitive** to car and rideshare
  - Service for **key rider markets** including inter-municipal commuters and industrial shift workers
  - Supports ridership for Stage 2 ION, and future connections to Cambridge-Guelph Passenger Rail
- **Riders will get more time back in their day**, with **potential time savings of up to 35 minutes** between Cambridge and Waterloo



Overnight Network

- Introduce **24/7 bus service** on **most of GRT's busiest routes**
  - **30-minute service** on core routes
- **Preliminary proposed routes include:**
  - Routes 301 (modified bus service with 7 and 91), 302 (modified service with 51), 201, 202, 204, 8, 12, and industrial trips to support 24/7 shift work
- **Riders will have transit options all night long,** all week
- **Operational adjustments to transit security** to ensure safe trips for transit riders and operators



GRT MobilityPLUS and Kiwanis Transit Plan

GRT MobilityPLUS and Kiwanis Transit Plan

Project Purpose:

- Guide the improvement and expansion of Specialized Transit Services within Waterloo Region



Who did we engage with?



People with disabilities that use MobilityPLUS and Kiwanis Transit



People with disabilities that don’t use the services



Members of the Specialized Transit Services Committee



Caregivers who support people with disabilities



Service organizations who serve people with disabilities

What we heard

- Customers are satisfied with MobilityPLUS services overall; the service allows customers to feel independent and confident
- Customers have good experiences with operators and dispatchers
- There is growing demand for MobilityPLUS service, and GRT is facing challenges in meeting the demand for trips
- Customers like the ability to book trips online
- Customers are unhappy with trip lengths and drop-off times
- Customers feel rushed when boarding vehicles

Strategic priorities

- Improve GRT's capacity to meet growing trip requests
- Continue to improve MobilityPLUS service and customer experience
- Investigate technology solutions to improve service
- Better understand customer needs and improve customer communication
- Improve coordination between MobilityPLUS and Kiwanis Transit



Recommendations

- Implement new end-to-end technology that handles eligibility and operations, to improve scheduling and collect better data on unmet trips
- Hire additional staff to support transition to new technology system and better customer experience
- Investigate microtransit and comingling, where flex routes and vehicles could serve both MobilityPLUS customers and non-MobilityPLUS customers in low ridership areas
- Integrate tracking of accessible taxis within specialized software
- Better engage with a broader customer base with diverse disabilities
- Establish channels for MobilityPLUS and Kiwanis Transit to better coordinate services where appropriate

GRT Township Transit Strategy

Township Transit Strategy

- Goals:
  - Expand and/or enhance existing rural transit service to effectively & efficiently meet the needs of Waterloo Region's rural residents
  - Consult with Waterloo Region's townships to design & cost (not fund) improved transit services, considering various options to meet the unique needs of each township

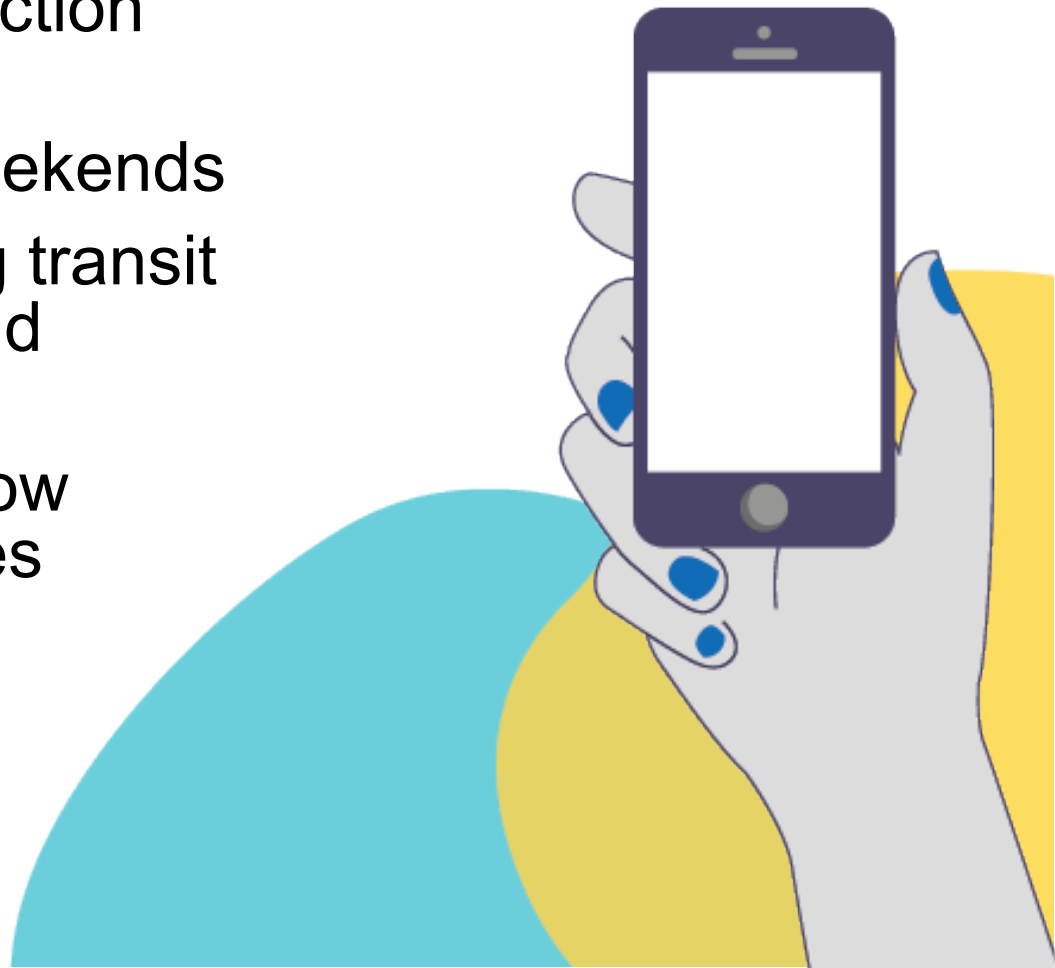


Types of transit service

Service Type	Description	Example
Fixed-Route	• Traditional bus service • Passengers required to walk/roll to/from a fixed stop • Operates defined schedule and route • Best suited for areas with consistent demand and travel patters • Not suitable for areas with very low density	GRT Route 21
Flex-Route	• Fixed-route that can deviate off-route to pick up and drop off passengers when requested • Fixed portion: best for corridors with high demand • Flex portion: best for local areas that do not have consistent ridership	GRT Route 77
On-Demand	• Shared-ride service • No fixed-route or schedule, instead a defined service area (zone) • Standard hours of operation • Trips booked using mobile app or phone call • Best suited for rural areas or time periods with low demand	GRT Route 79 Breslau

What we heard

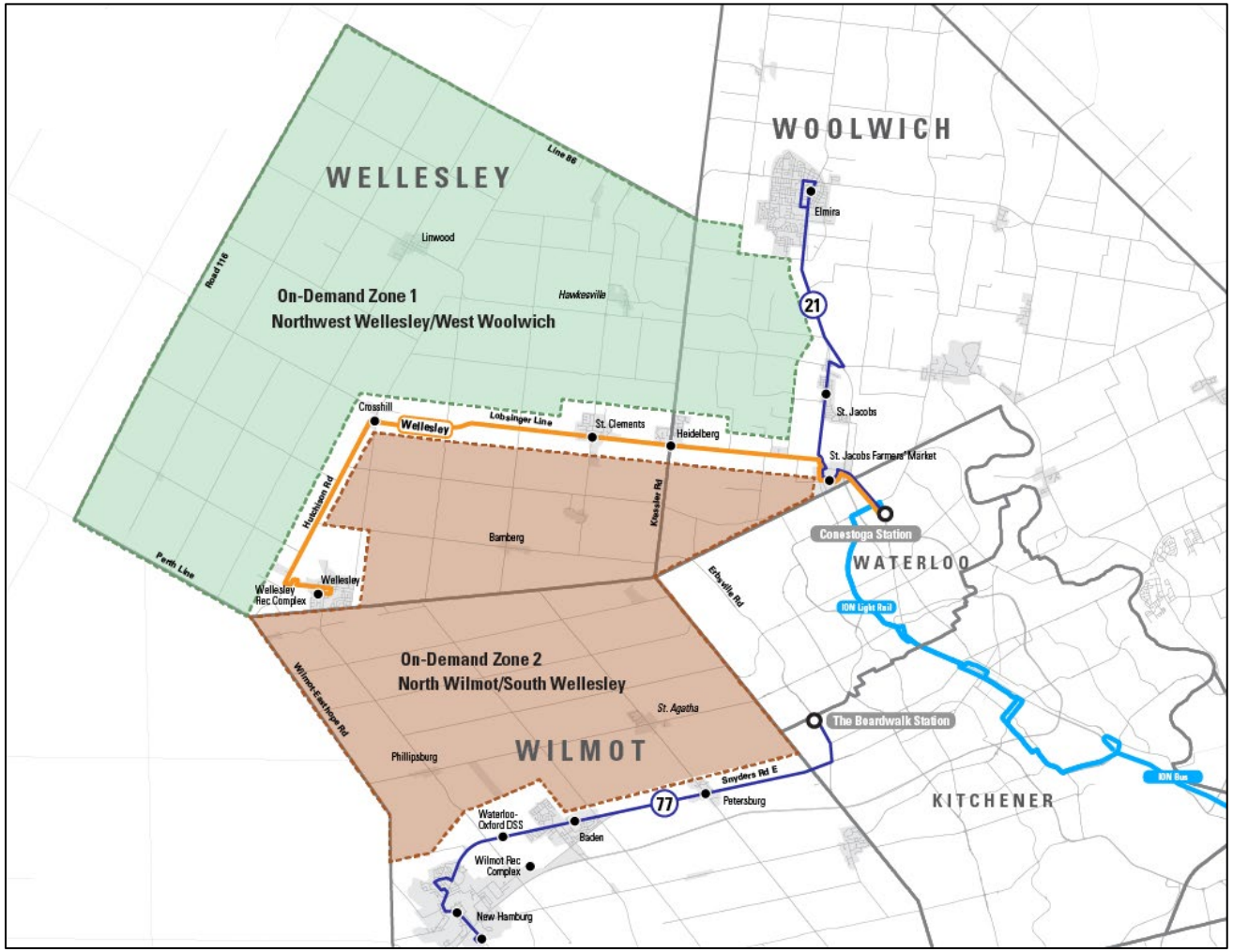
- General preference for fixed-route transit
- Routing alternatives and preferred connection points
- Travel times-of-day for weekdays and weekends
- Residents in townships that have existing transit service are more willing to use on-demand transit
- Dissatisfaction with a lack of service, or low frequency/service hours for existing routes
- Concern that transit will negatively affect community character



Wellesley Township

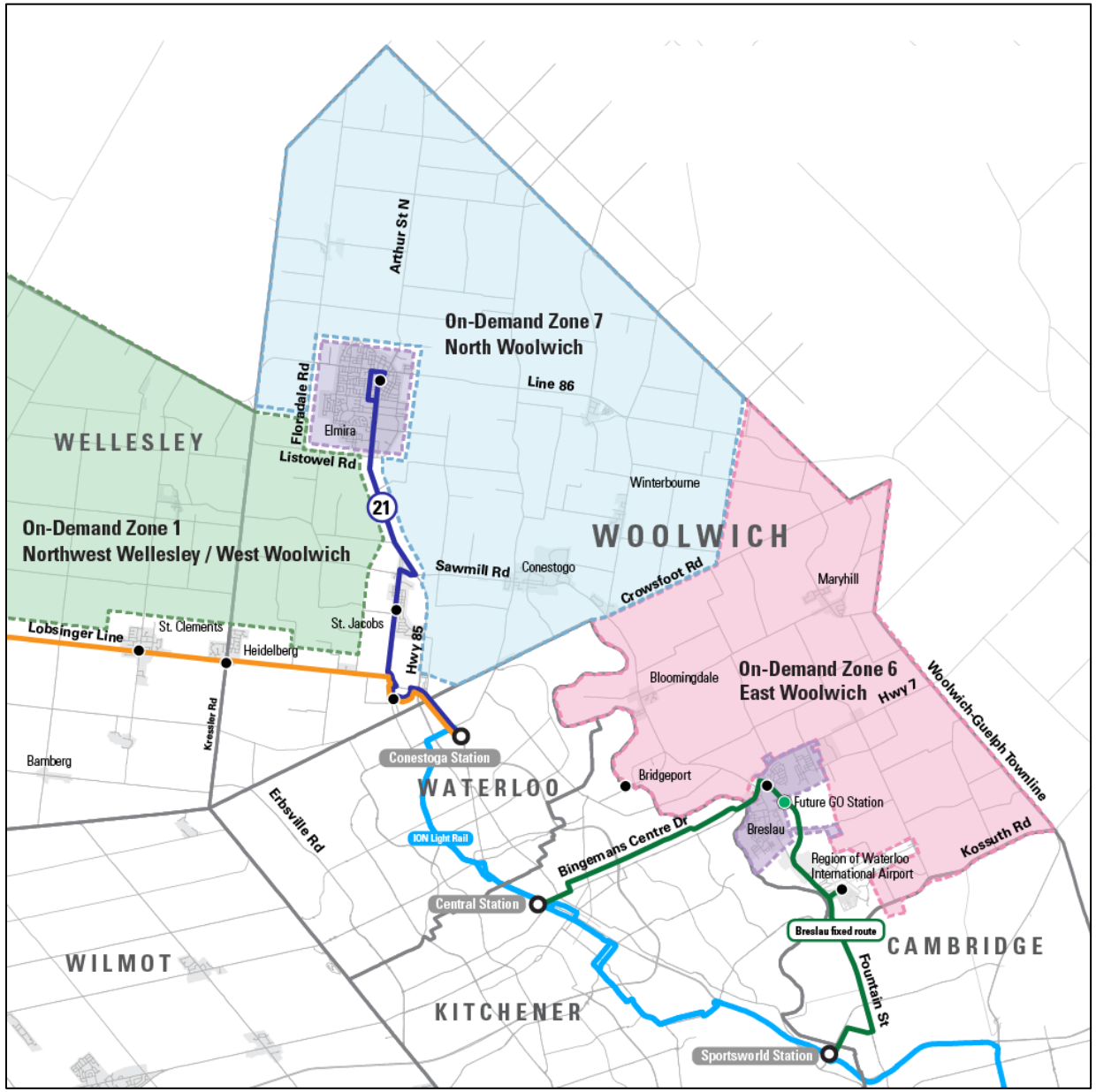
- Fixed-route transit connecting the Village of Wellesely to Conestoga Station via Crosshill, St. Clements, and Heidelberg
- On-demand transit in zones 1 and 2 for other rural township areas





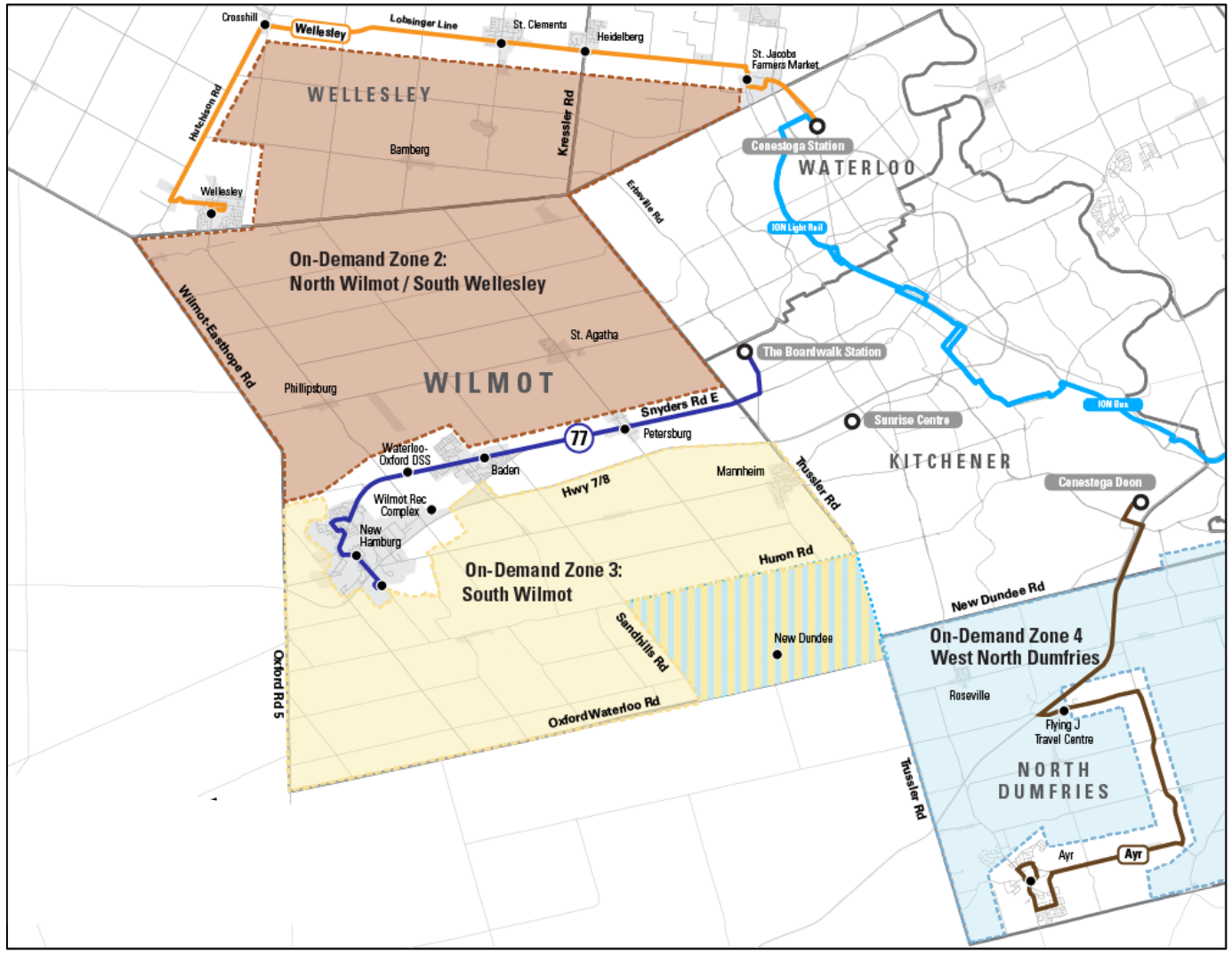
Woolwich Township

- Fixed-route transit Connecting Central Station to Sportsword Station via Breslau and the Region of Waterloo International Airport
- On-demand transit for Elmira
- Resized flex zone for Route 79 Breslau
- On-demand transit in zones 1, 6 & 7 for other rural township areas



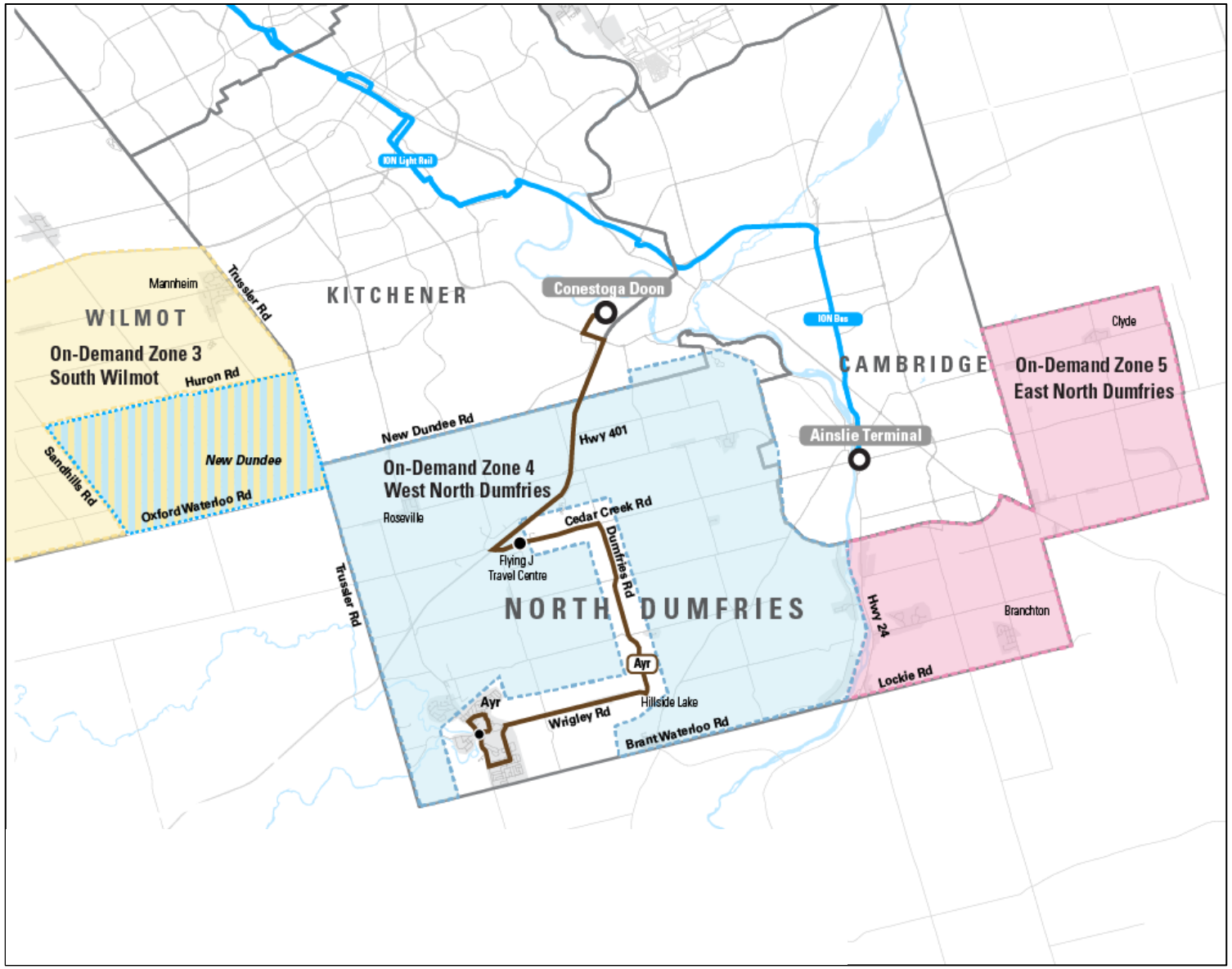
Wilmot Township

- Minor routing improvements to Route 77
- Expand service hours when warranted, including later weekday evenings and weekends
- Technology improvements to improve customer experince
- On-demand transit in zones 2, 3 & 4 for other rural township areas



North Dumfries Township

- Fixed-route transit connecting the Village of Ayr to Conestoga Doon Station via the 401 Business Park
- On-demand transit in zones 4 and 5 for other rural township areas



Upcoming open houses

- Drop in any time between 4:30 and 7 p.m.

- **Wellesley Township**
  - Thursday, Nov. 14, 4:30 - 7 p.m.
  - Community Room, Wellesley Rec Complex

- **Woolwich Township**
  - Monday, Nov. 18, 4:30 - 7 p.m.
  - Empire Room, Breslau Community Centre

- **Wilmot Township**
  - Tuesday, Nov. 19, 4:30 - 7 p.m.
  - Multipurpose Room, New Hamburg Community Centre

- **North Dumfries Township**
  - Wednesday, Nov. 20, 4:30 - 7 p.m.
  - MacNeil Hall, North Dumfries Community Centre

Next steps for GRT

Next Steps for the GRT Business Plan

- Refining GRT's transit investment priorities based on public and stakeholder feedback
- Combining the **Township Transit Strategy**, **MobilityPLUS Strategy**, **Technology Modernization Plan**, **Financial Model** and **Fare Strategy** into GRT's new Business Plan
- Present GRT Business Plan to stakeholders, the public, staff, and Regional Council in Winter 2025

We are here

1 June/July 2024

- Share information about the Business Plan process
- Hear about our community's transit priorities and issues

2 Fall 2024

- Share network concepts and priorities
- Collect input to inform the plan and supporting policies and programs

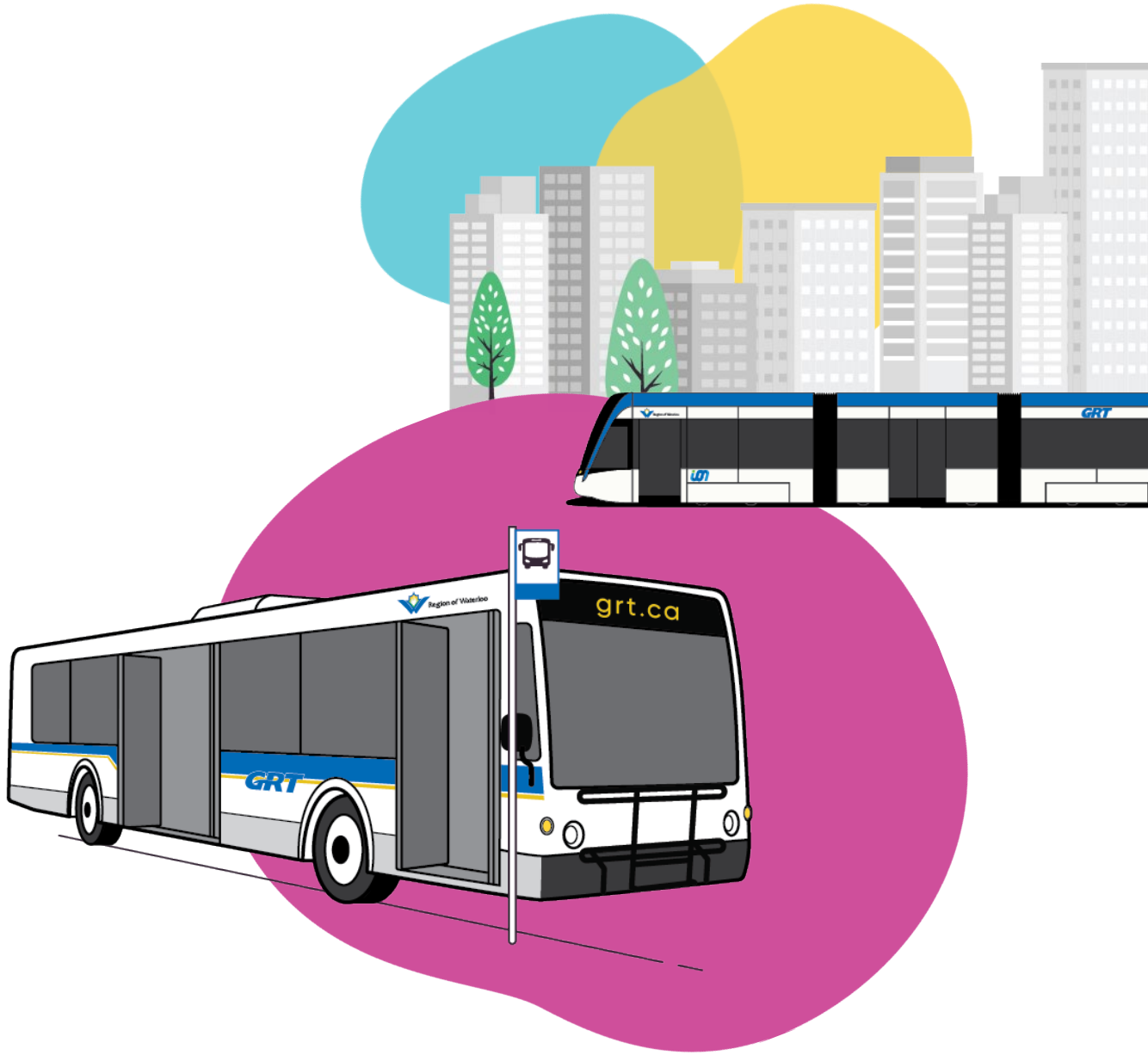
3 Winter 2025

- Final GRT Business Plan, including proposed policies, programs, and fares strategies, presented to public and Regional Council

Thanks!

Share your support for GRT's Transit Priorities

grt.ca/BusinessPlan



Discussion and Q & A