

## **Encouraging Municipal Government Collaboration to Address Transit Needs and Gaps**

Submitted by: Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber of Commerce Brantford-Brant  
Co-sponsored by: Milton Chamber of Commerce

### **Issue**

The absence of adequate transit options in small and rural communities impacts business competitiveness and the mobility of residents. Greater collaboration between adjacent municipalities with and without adequate transit solutions could help address transit gaps by extending or building on existing transit systems.

### **Background**

Public transit in small towns and rural communities is often either insufficient or non-existent. Limited mobility negatively impacts business productivity by hindering its talent pool and potential for growth. Limited and/or insufficient transit puts communities at a disadvantage when it comes to attracting and retaining talent, industry, and investments. Access to affordable and reliable public transit would allow local businesses to remain more competitive, and residents to maintain independence with greater access to healthcare providers, employment, and community hubs.

The Sinclair and Armstrong Avenue industrial area of Georgetown is a significant employment hub, housing approximately 180 companies and 4000 jobs. However, it faces consequential accessibility challenges for workers without vehicles. The area is only serviced by a GO bus originating from the Guelph or Mount Pleasant GO stations, leaving employees with an additional 20-30 minute walk to reach their workplaces. This lack of direct public transit limits access to talent, particularly for those who cannot afford a car. Many potential workers are unable to access job opportunities in this industrial area, forcing businesses to contend with a limited talent pool. This situation contributes to increased traffic congestion and higher commuting costs for employees who must rely on personal vehicles or ride-hailing services. Some businesses have resorted to using third-party transportation solutions at their own cost, further impacting their revenue, competitiveness, and growth potential. This additional expense not only affects the bottom line of these companies but also hinders their ability to expand and contribute more significantly to the local economy.

Another example demonstrating insufficient transit is the [County of Brant industrial parks](#) located in the Cainsville (eastern) and Rest Acres Road (western) areas of the county. These critical employment lands draw employees from the City of Brantford, but the City's municipal transit system is unable to efficiently extend its services to employment lands in the County due to the conflicting single-tier governance structures of each municipality.

Since it is not feasible for every municipality, especially more rural and/or remote communities, to invest in community-wide public transit, nor for the province to directly subsidize every municipality's transit needs, the Government of Ontario is urged to put in place the necessary policies, infrastructure, and/or funding to encourage neighbouring municipalities to develop and

implement innovative solutions that address transit challenges and gaps across municipal boundaries. This is especially important given the rapid population growth taking place in many parts of the province.

This includes, utilizing pre-existing cross-municipal collaboration between adjacent municipalities to expand transit systems to service a wider geographic area, specifically into regions that lack transit options and service key employment zones. Addressing cross-municipal transit needs has spillover benefits for surrounding municipalities and their economies as workers, commuters, and residents can more easily and seamlessly travel between regions and strengthen local connectivity.

Moreover, while “micro transit” solutions are being developed and implemented by municipalities to address some of these gaps, they lack frequency and do not address mass transit needs to industrial parks.

Collaboration between municipal governments – with the support of the provincial government – to address transit gaps in underserved regions would help enhance last-mile connectivity, offering residents, employees, and commuters a greener, more cost-effective alternative to the use of personal vehicles.

## **Recommendations**

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Incentivize policies and regulatory frameworks to encourage and streamline transit project collaboration between municipalities, and First Nations communities. For example, work with insurance companies to better understand and support the extension of transit services into neighbouring municipalities, or addressing jurisdictional boundaries and different funding models to ensure adequate coverage for newly serviced areas.
2. Support planning initiatives that identify transit gaps and establish funding to build the infrastructure needed to expand existing transit services across municipal boundaries and into adjacent municipalities and First Nations communities that lack adequate transit options.
3. Update provincial planning strategies to identify regional transit gaps and overlooked transportation corridors, such as those outlined in the Southwestern Ontario and Greater Golden Horseshoe plans.
4. Prioritize strategic links between municipal and provincial transit systems, including first-mile and last-mile connectivity solutions to enhance system accessibility, integration, and optimization.
5. Continue investing in the Community Transportation Grant Program to encourage and specifically support municipal collaboration.
6. Expand transit funding from the provincial government to include predictable operational funding in addition to support capital funding for fleet expansion.
7. Collaborate with the federal government to invest in multi-municipal and/or regional transportation projects and initiatives.