



DRT and Durham Region Street Outreach Joint Initiative

Durham Region Transit Executive
Committee Presentation

November 6, 2024

Unsheltered Homelessness in Durham Region

Regional Council identified a need to increase street outreach programs to ensure appropriate coverage across Durham to support the increased instances of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

As of September 2024, the Durham By-Name List (BNL) has 811 actively homeless individuals.



Regional Street Outreach Program

An **engagement** team who seek people experiencing unsheltered homelessness with the goal of developing trust, meeting basic needs, and ensuring people are connected with Durham's by-name list (BNL) and Coordinated Access System.

Durham Region Transit (DRT) and Street Outreach Pilot

- DRT identified a need for support and fully funded 2 additional Outreach staff for a year as a pilot, supporting individuals who misuse transit facilities with the aim of connecting them to appropriate services.
- A dedicated partnership was developed to focus on supporting individuals who are engaging in extended bus rides and squatting in public bus shelters, impacting the public's access to DRT services.
- Outreach staff engages with individuals to assess and identify needs, assist to meet basic needs, build rapport, discuss the By-Name List, and complete appropriate referrals with a focus on supporting the individual to accept a referral to a shelter.
- Based on the success of the program, DRT is continuing to fund two Outreach staff positions indefinitely as a base item in their budget.

Durham Region Transit (DRT) and Street Outreach Pilot

DRT and IEHSD jointly developed a set of criteria to measure success of the pilot:

Number of engagements

Service Location and Type of Incident

Response Time

Reduction of Police/By-Law involvement

While the above formed the basis for performance tracking and reporting, DRT and IEHSD jointly understand that the issues being addressed are complex and multifaceted, often involving other departments and requiring specific and ongoing interventions. Accordingly, non-metric based performance benefits will also be recorded and tracked where possible, such that other positive externalities are not ignored when determining overall performance and efficacy.

Key Performance Indicators

- Outreach has responded to **68** requests from DRT from January 4 to October 17, 2024.

| Reason | Count |
|--------------------------|-------|
| Bus shelter | 25 |
| Extended bus ride | 18 |
| Client access to service | 10 |
| Other (specify) | 6 |
| Information | 3 |
| Wellness Check | 3 |
| Bus terminal | 2 |
| Client conduct | 1 |

- Outreach has completed 394 interactions at bus shelters and 115 referrals as a result of these interactions.



KPIs

- “Hot spot” areas have been identified to proactively engage with individuals to ensure transit is used for transport, and not as a warming centre or safe sleep area. Priority locations include:
 - McQuay @ Dundas - Whitby
 - Bond @ Ritson - Oshawa
 - Ritson @ Bond - Oshawa
 - Bloor @ Simcoe - Oshawa
 - Williamson @ Division – Oshawa
 - Bayly @ Kitney – Ajax
 - Harwood @ Hunt– Ajax
 - All shelters along the corridor from Station street to Bayly – Ajax
- Although proactive engagements have only recently started being tracked to capture Outreach work being completed, for the period of October 8, 2024 – October 17, 2024, Outreach completed 261 proactive engagements at bus shelters.

| Municipality | Bus Stops Visited |
|--------------|-------------------|
| Ajax | 62 |
| Brock | 0 |
| Clarington | 18 |
| Oshawa | 51 |
| Pickering | 24 |
| Scugog | 7 |
| Uxbridge | 0 |
| Whitby | 99 |

Benefits

- Represents a critical opportunity to engage new and existing clients providing key referrals and support to help end their homelessness.
- Protects the integrity of DRT transit services by addressing misuse and maintaining a safe, accessible environment for all riders.
- Enhances community safety and well-being by offering timely interventions and reducing the need for emergency services.



Hours of Operation and Staffing

- Outreach operates 24/7, including holidays.
- Consists of three rotating shifts to ensure continuous support, including overnight and during extreme weather alerts.
- Regional vehicles are utilized to extend support across transit routes and remote areas throughout the Region, with staff trained in mental health, harm reduction, and crisis intervention.
- As of November 2024, there are 12 regular full-time; 8 regular part-time and 6 full-time temporary Outreach Workers.



Example: Matthew*



- Experiencing unsheltered homelessness for approximately 2 years.
- Complex needs, impaired cognitive abilities.
- Suffered from severe, chronic wounds in his limbs due to injuries and health conditions.
- Frequently used DRT to sleep on the bus and/or escape the cold (extended bus rides).
- Outreach received many calls from DRT regarding this individual; we supported by attending frequently to build trust and rapport. with accessing more appropriate warming/shelter options.
- With time and support from DRT, we were able to help Matthew transition to more suitable warming and shelter options.

** Name and some details changed for anonymity*



Homeless Help Line

**Online**

durham.ca/EmergencyShelters

**Email**

Homelesshelp@durham.ca

**Phone**

905-668-4113 ext. 5510
toll free 1-800-372-1102 ext. 5510
311 ext. 5510



Scan the QR code to
visit Durham's
Emergency Shelters
webpage.

If you require this information in an accessible format, please contact the
Accessibility Coordinator at accessibility@durham.ca or 905-668-4113 ext. 2009.

Contact Us:

Durham Region Street Outreach Program

Monday - Sunday

Hours: 24 hours

Homelesshelp@durham.ca