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Durham Region Transit Report

To: Durham Region Transit Executive Committee
From: General Manager, Durham Region Transit
Report: #2025-DRT-22
Date: December 3, 2025

Subject:

Council Motion to review immediate conventional service to Oshawa subdivision

Recommendation:

That the Transit Executive Committee recommends to Regional Council:

That further to the resolution adopted by Regional Council regarding additional Transit Services to the Subdivision West of Harmony Road North at Nancy Diamond Boulevard, City of Oshawa, that Durham Regional Transit implement Option 1 of this report, which introduces scheduled bus service to the impacted area in April 2026, based on anticipated new bus arrivals in Q1 2026.

Report:

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to recommend to the Transit Executive Committee the reliable and consistent transit service DRT plan to provide for a subdivision on Harmony Road north of Conlin Road, at Nancy Diamond Blvd.

2. Background

2.1 At its meeting held November 26, 2025, Regional Council referred a motion to the Transit Executive Committee (Attachment #1), directing DRT staff to determine how to provide some form of regular transit service to a new subdivision east of Harmony Road, south of Nancy Diamond Boulevard.

- 2.2 Earlier in November, the City of Oshawa (City) staff indicated that pedestrians are walking along the shoulder of Harmony Road North (Regional Road 33) between Conlin Road and Dyas Avenue. The City highlighted a significant increase in both traffic and speeds since the removal of Hwy 407 tolls, and enhanced DRT service was needed to address the immediate needs of the community.
- 2.3 On November 21, 2025, DRT informed the City that DRT service on Harmony Road was planned for 2027, but had been advanced to the 2026 Service Plan, and is included for consideration during the Region's 2026 Budget process. The City was advised that at this time changes could not be made to the existing scheduled route network or On Demand service without significant negative consequences to existing transit ridership. Further, DRT does not have the resources required to provide additional service in 2025, including the extra bus that would be required during peak period.

Based on operational and labour agreement timelines, budget approval, ridership demands/priorities across the Region, and fleet requirements, the City was informed that the earliest DRT could implement scheduled service to the subdivision or to enhance the On Demand network, would be the service change that will take place in April 2026.

DRT did commit to attempt to increase awareness of residents that On Demand service is currently available for travel to routes and bus stops at the intersection of Harmony Road and Conlin Road.

- 2.4 DRT's Service Guidelines provide the framework for allocation of resources across the transit network consistent with approved service strategies, such as the following:
- a. Service deployment: On Demand provides transit service in rural Durham and urban areas when customer demand does not meet minimum ridership productivity for scheduled bus service (minimum eight boardings per hour).
 - b. Service frequency and span of service: 30-minute frequency for base service.
 - c. Service proximity: Within urbanized areas, 95 per cent of dwellings within 800 metres of a bus stop.
- 2.5 The DRT service model is dynamic, meaning that as ridership reaches eight to ten boardings per hour, considerations are given to replacing the current service. In areas where ridership is growing and strong, On Demand is replaced by scheduled service. In areas where ridership demand is low, scheduled service is replaced by On Demand. This dynamic model enables DRT to allocate scheduled service

resources to the areas of greatest demand across the Region, while continuing to make public transit service available to all areas of the Region.

- 2.6 On Demand service follows established operating guidelines.
- a. Booking Window: Currently, trips can be booked up to seven days in advance by customers registered with Specialized transit, and beginning at midnight the day before the planned trip by other customers. TEC recently approved the recommendation to revise the trip booking window to four days for customers registered with Specialized transit, and three days for other customers. This change is planned to be implemented before the end of December 2025.
 - b. Trip Bookings: Customers can book their trips using the DRT On Demand app, or by calling a DRT booking agent at 311. When using the app, customers can manage their upcoming trips, cancel trips they no longer need, and track their pick-ups.
 - c. Service Hours: 24 hours a day within urban areas.
 - d. Pick-up window: Pick-ups are scheduled within a 20-minute window.
- 2.7 The 10-year Transit Service and Finance Strategy (2023-2032) approved by TEC and Regional Council, established a path forward for record investments in transit services that will more than double the level of transit service. Relative to municipal comparators, Durham Region Transit continues to be last in several key metrics (based on 2023 data).

Revenue vehicle hours per capita: 0.7 for DRT compared to average of 1.6 for comparators

Municipal operating contribution per capita: 22 per cent below average for comparators.

Ridership per revenue vehicle hour: 32 per cent below average for comparators.

Ridership per capita: 69 per cent below average for comparators

- 2.8 Ridership demands across the Region exceed current transit service resources, and DRT continues to advance annual service plans that provide service to areas of highest ridership demand. Unfortunately, some residents and businesses do not yet have convenient access to schedule services. However, through continued Regional investment, the transit strategy has been successful to date, resulting in

record level of transit ridership in 2024, with continued record ridership in 2025 for all concessions except the UPASS.

2.9 When making a change to an existing route, such as Option 2 in this report, or designing a new route, transit planners consider several key factors, including the following.

a. Customer Impact

- Changes in travel time, directness of the trip
- Number of riders that gain or lose service
- Impact to at-risk customers

b. Ridership Performance

- Current ridership and productivity
- Potential ridership of revised routing
- Growth opportunities in new service areas
- Seasonal or time-of-day variations

c. Operational Feasibility

- Scheduling impacts
- Fleet and operator availability
- Roadway and traffic conditions

d. Infrastructure Readiness

- Adequacies of sidewalks and stop locations
- Safe turning and recovery locations

e. Policy and strategic alignment

- Consistency with growth plans and transit strategies
- Alignment with service standards
- Support for transit-oriented development areas

3. Previous Reports and Decisions

3.1 NA

4. Discussion

4.1 Considerations

- a. Challenges introducing scheduled bus service to newly occupied subdivisions have been experienced before. The ongoing presence of construction activity, discontinuous roads, and incomplete pedestrian networks are common in the early stages of occupancy. These challenges are exacerbated by “leap-frogging”, where new subdivisions are separated from the existing built-up area by rural or natural heritage zones. In new developments abutting the existing urban area, prospective customers are often within a reasonable walk of existing routes and continuous pedestrian facilities are more common.
- b. Recent residential development in Durham Region has tended toward new developments being built next to the existing built boundary. Notable exceptions have occurred in the Seaton area of Pickering, where a substantial natural heritage system separates individual developments. When developments along Alexander Knox Boulevard were built, the nearest active scheduled service stops were nearly three kilometers away. Until the extension of Route 112 to the area in September 2025, On Demand was the basis for public transit near those homes. Extending service to isolated developments is more resource-intensive and cannot be always implemented immediately.
- c. Even when developments are close to existing routes, discontinuous pedestrian networks and rural cross-section roads (typically ditch-lined with no sidewalks) can have the same effect as more distant development. As an example, Conlin Road between Ritson and Townline Roads is only now being urbanized despite nearby developments having been occupied. As a result, DRT has been unable to locate two-way bus stops at locations nearest to some customer’s points of origin and while stops are nominally accessible there is insufficient space for customer amenities and reaching the stops can be challenging for those using mobility devices.
- d. Sidewalks within subdivisions not connecting with pedestrian infrastructure on nearby arterial roads is the most common challenge DRT experiences serving new growth areas.

4.2 A cursory review of September data from this area showed that approximately five On Demand trips are delivered daily, for 17 distinct customers. Trip requests are happening throughout the day, with the most requests during the midday period (9 AM to 3 PM), followed by the PM Peak (3 PM – 7 PM), Evening (7 PM – Midnight), AM Peak (6 AM – 9 AM), and Overnight.

- 4.3 Based on available On Demand trip data, DRT's experience where On Demand has replaced scheduled service in a new development, and building permits issued so far in the area, it is estimated that 20-30 customers per day will utilize the service upon its introduction, with the potential for at least an additional 40-50 daily customers as the development advances along Harmony Road between Nancy Diamond Boulevard and Britannia Road.

Options

- 4.4 Option 1: Implementation of scheduled service Q1 2026

Regularly scheduled service for the area is included for consideration in the 2026 Service Plan within the existing budget guideline. Adding new service to this area requires an additional bus during peak periods, which will be possible when previously ordered buses are delivered starting in the first quarter of 2026. The earliest time that DRT may be able to add new services during peak periods is the service change in April 2026.

On Demand is available to residents in the area, and customers unable to book a trip through On Demand can access alternative transportation services.

- 4.5 Option 2: Revise Oshawa Route 405 in January 2026

Existing Route 405 operates between Oshawa Centre Terminal and Delpark Homes Centre, via Gibb Street, Thornton Road, Adelaide Avenue, Wilson Road, Conlin Road, and Harmony Road. This option would require the northern terminus to be changed to Harmony Road and Nancy Diamond Boulevard during all service periods, and service to be removed from Harmony Road south of Conlin Road to Delpark Homes Centre.

A minimum of 215 existing daily customers use route 405 to access Delpark Homes Centre and stops at Harmony Road and Greenhill Avenue. These existing customers would be required to transfer to routes 407 or 916, or walk the one kilometer from the intersection of Wilson Road and Coldstream Drive. Routes 916 and 405 do not operate on the same frequencies, meaning transfer times for customers will vary between 5-20 minutes throughout the day.

Based on a degraded level of service to Delpark Homes Centre area, it is highly likely that several existing transit customers are likely to choose alternative transportation.

4.6 Option 3: Two trips during weekday morning peak

A limited service (two trips per day in the morning peak period) operating between Harmony Terminal and Nancy Diamond Boulevard can be implemented in January 2026 through schedule adjustments to existing services. Customers would be required to transfer to other routes at Harmony Terminal for onward travel. On Demand would remain available at other times of the day.

Resources are not available during the PM peak period to make similar adjustments. If significant numbers of new customers use these trips, On Demand trip availability in other times of the day may be further strained as additional customers attempt to make return trips.

The financial impacts of these trips can be absorbed within existing scheduling parameters.

The DRT service strategy does not consider limited and inconsistent trips because the type of service is challenging to communicate to customers, does not meet the travel needs of customers, and tends to be underutilized.

5. Relationship to Strategic Plan

a. Connected and Vibrant Communities

- C1. Align Regional infrastructure and asset management with projected growth, climate impacts, and community needs.
- C2. Enable a full range of housing options, including housing that is affordable and close to transit.
- C3. Improve public transit system connectivity, reliability, and competitiveness.
- C4. Improve road safety, including the expansion and connection of active transportation networks to enhance the range of safe mobility options.

b. Healthy People, Caring Communities

- H5. Provide services for seniors and work with community partners to support aging in place.

c. Resilient Local Economies

- R1. Attract and retain quality employers that strengthen key economic sectors, including energy and technology.
- d. Strong Relationships
- S5. Ensure accountable and transparent decision-making to serve community needs, while responsibly managing available resources.
- 5.2 This report aligns with/addresses the following Foundation(s) in Durham Region's 2025-2035 Strategic Plan:
- a. People: Making the Region of Durham a great place to work, attracting, and retaining talent.
 - b. Technology: Keeping pace with technological change to ensure efficient and effective service delivery.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 In consideration of overall customer impacts, DRT resources, and alternative providers of transportation services for this area, Option 1 is recommended.
- 6.2 Option 2 would result in a significant negative impact to considerably more transit customers than would benefit from the revised route. Further, many current riders negatively impacted by the change may choose alternative transportation, and it may be difficult to attract them back to public transit and DRT in the future. Option 3 is not a viable solution and would not meet the demonstrated travel needs of residents.
- 6.3 All available transit resources, both scheduled and On Demand, are currently assigned to deliver DRT services. Pending several factors, such as 2026 budget decisions and fleet availability, the earliest DRT can implement the planned scheduled service to the Nancy Diamond Boulevard area is April 2026.
- 6.4 On Demand service is currently available to residents in the area, although demand for the service across the Region exceeds current capacity. Until scheduled service can be implemented, residents unable to secure an On Demand trip in this area have access to alternative transportation services.

7. Attachments

Attachment #1: Motion

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

Bill Holmes
General Manager, DRT

Recommended for Presentation to Committee

Original signed by

Elaine C. Baxter-Trahair
Chief Administrative Officer

Motion to Suspend the Rules of Procedure to Introduce a Motion Concerning DRT

Moved by: Councillor Chapman

Seconded by: Councillor Marimpietri

Motion Regarding DRT

Moved by: Councillor Chapman

Seconded by: Councillor Marimpietri

WHEREAS the subdivision west of Harmony Rd N at Nancy Diamond Blvd is now being occupied and currently the only access to this subdivision is via Nancy Diamond Blvd: and

WHEREAS many of the residents of this subdivision rely on public transit as their main mode of transportation but currently there is no existing Durham Regional Transit route serving this area with the closest DRT stop being located at the corner of Conlin Rd E & Harmony Rd N which 1.6 km south of Nancy Diamond Blvd; and

WHEREAS there is DRT “On Demand” service but it requires both the initial and return trips to be pre-booked up to a week in advance, so it does not provide reasonable or sufficient services to these residents it does not account for any delays or schedule changes by a resident or DRT; and

WHEREAS if a resident uses “On Demand” service but a return trip cannot be scheduled, is missed or cancelled due to delays or schedule changes the resident can only take regular DRT service to Conlin Rd E and Harmony Rd N forcing them to potentially walk the 1.6 km along Harmony Rd N to get to their home; and

WHEREAS Harmony Rd N is a Regional Rd that currently does not have adequate space for a sidewalk which presents a safety risk to pedestrians as it can be difficult for a motorist to avoid an unexpected pedestrian in the roadway, especially at night or during inclement weather; and

WHEREAS Harmony Rd N has seen a visible and significant increase in both traffic and speeds since the removal of Hwy 407 tolls which is exacerbating the issue and raises the risk to public safety; and

WHEREAS the Region of Durham is responsible for improving safety for all road users, which include pedestrians, cyclists, motorists and vehicle passengers and Council’s endorsed “Vision Zero” states “the guiding principle is safety prioritized over factors such as cost, speed, delay, level of service and convenience, factors upon which decisions were traditionally made”; and

WHEREAS it is understood that this area of Harmony Rd N cannot be reconstructed to accommodate the installation of sidewalks this immediate safety concern and risk must be addressed; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT staff be directed to:

1. Determine how Durham Regional Transit can, in addition to the “On Demand” service, immediately provide some form of regular transit service for the residents of this subdivision.