

Town of Truro & Municipality of Colchester

# Regional Transit Study

## Final Report

2026 March 31



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Final Report

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2026 March 31

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## Executive Summary

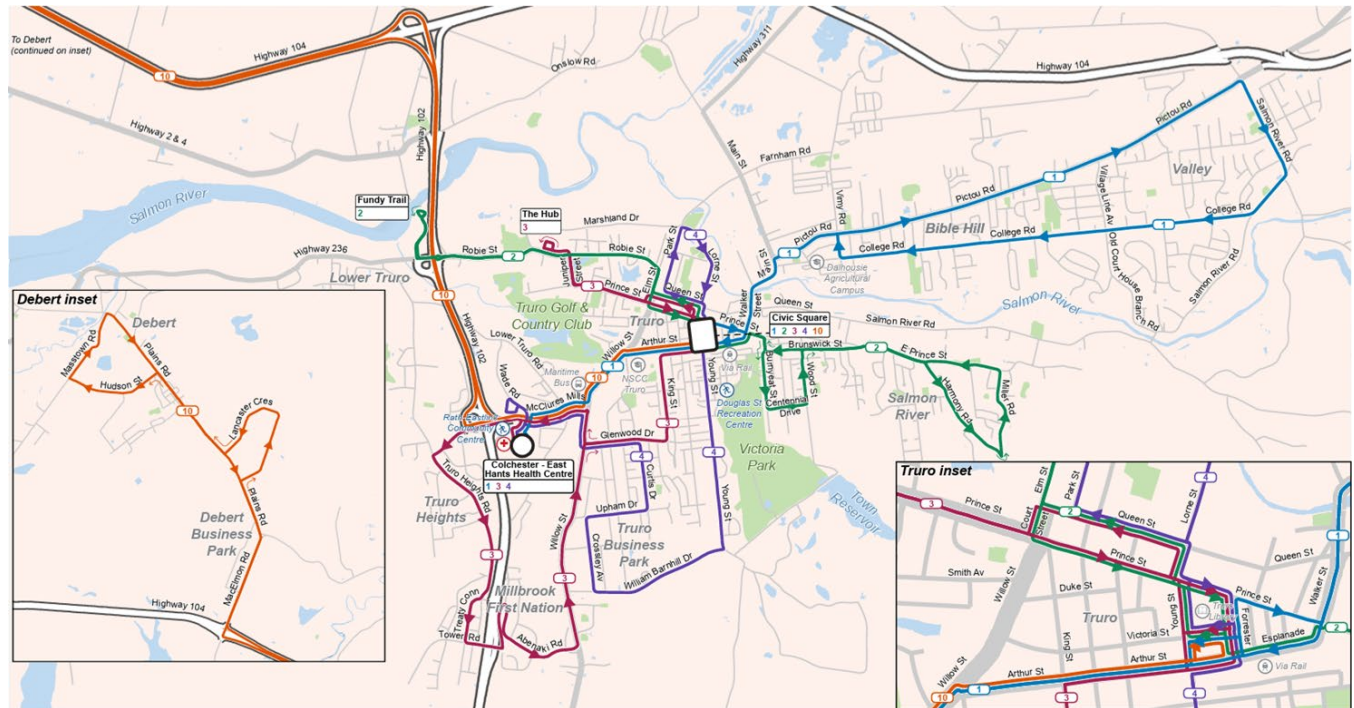
The Town of Truro and the Municipality of the County of Colchester have identified a need for public transit in the community. Truro and Central Colchester, with a 2021 combined population of just under 24,000, is now one of the largest urban communities in Atlantic Canada that does not have its own transit system. Amidst a renewed interest in rural and community transit in Nova Scotia, other communities such as Bridgewater, Pictou County, and Antigonish have launched their own transit services. In partnership with Arcadis, the Town and the Municipality undertaken a study to assess and design transit service concepts that address and respond to the travel and mobility needs of the growing region. This work was grounded in a review of policy, demographics, stakeholder and public feedback, and best practices from transit systems across Nova Scotia and Canada.

This project builds on the 2011 Transit Feasibility Study and incorporates current municipal planning strategies, community action plans, and recent studies on affordable housing, accessibility, and regional transportation. A review of Truro and Colchester's established policy documents showed support for improved transportation service, with public transit being frequently cited as one of the most important positive interventions that could be made towards improving transportation in the region. Transportation poverty and core housing need are closely linked, and reducing household transportation costs through the provision of transit could make a substantial difference in the lives of community members. A more transit-supportive population density, as well as lower-income communities that could greatly benefit from transit, can be found in Truro and Central Colchester, particularly in Truro's central core and the Colchester communities of Bible Hill and Salmon River.

Stakeholder and community groups, through consultation efforts, agreed on the importance of having public transit in the community as soon as possible. The general perception in the community is that transit is a necessary public service that is overdue for introduction in Truro and Colchester. Stakeholder groups emphasized the importance of affordability, accessibility, and the need to serve major destinations like postsecondary schools, jobs, shopping centres, and government services. The existing door-to-door transportation service provided by CTCL is well-regarded in the community, but it is over capacity, suggesting the need for transit service that can carry more passengers. Insights were gathered from other community transit systems around Nova Scotia including Kings, Pictou County, and Bridgewater Transit, while a public origin-destination survey with a very high rate of participation from community members revealed significant demand to three major destinations: downtown Truro, the Colchester-East Hants Health Centre and Rath-Eastlink Community Centre, and the Robie Street retail corridor in western Truro and Lower Truro.

A conceptual transit network was developed based on policy-driven principles of access to food and access to jobs, as well as the density of population around the service area, the constraints of the road network, and the results of the public origin-destination survey. The conceptual network included four routes serving Truro and Central Colchester and one route connecting the central urban area to the growing employment hub of Debert. The network in Truro and Central Colchester was designed to serve jobs, supermarkets, connect to as many of the three main destinations as possible, and serve other key trips identified during engagement efforts like the connection between the Dalhousie Agricultural Campus and Maritime Bus terminal. All routes in the conceptual network would converge together at a central transit hub in Truro, while many of the proposed routes also converge together at the hospital. A map of this conceptual network is shown on the following page.

Conceptual Transit Network



Infrastructure is a necessary component of a transit system. In advance of the launch date of a new transit system, bus stops will need to be designated. Each bus stop will require a sign and passenger waiting area, while busy stops can be enhanced with passenger waiting infrastructure like benches, shelters, and garbage cans or recycling bins. The transit service network and infrastructure should blend seamlessly between Truro and Colchester, with a single unified infrastructure treatment across the service area, especially as many community members' trips do not take place entirely within municipal boundaries. Many major regional institutions, such as the hospital and Rath-Eastlink, are shared between Truro and Colchester. A student at Dalhousie AC may live in Truro, or a resident of Colchester may shop for groceries at a major supermarket in Truro.

The recommended operating and governance structure for public transit in Truro and Colchester is a jointly owned service with Board representatives from both municipalities, representation from Millbrook First Nation, and contracted operations provided by CTCL. This structure would follow the successful example of Pictou County Transit, balance the needs of different communities across the service area, and leverage the experience of CTCL in operating transportation services in Truro and Colchester.

Costs involved in providing transit service have implications to both capital and operating budgets of the managing municipalities. Capital costs, which include vehicle procurement, facility construction, and the implementation of bus stop zones, are estimated at just under \$7 million, \$4.5 million of which is estimated to be reflective of facility construction. This may be deferred if a temporary home is found for the bus fleet's storage. Operating costs are dependent on ridership, as fare revenue will partially offset operating costs. The system is proposed to be funded through a combination of fare revenue and municipal funding contributions. Fare revenue is estimated to cover 20-28% of costs with a recommended cash fare of \$3 and a recommended monthly pass cost of \$70. The net operating cost is estimated at between \$1.6 million and \$1.8 million annually for the conceptual transit network. A rural shuttle system, which provides twice-weekly service to the communities of Stewiacke, Bass River, and Tatamagouche, is costed as a separate item in this analysis. An overview is also

provided of potential grant and funding sources from senior levels of government that could be used to offset transit service costs.

Transit service provides many benefits to people in the communities it serves. Social benefits of connecting communities to necessary services, economic impacts of connecting workers to jobs, tourism impacts of connecting visitors to destinations across the service area, the potential to make a community more attractive to prospective residents, reducing transportation costs to offset the costs of housing to residents, providing enhanced flexibility to residents in where to live, and the environmental benefits of reducing reliance on single-occupancy vehicles are all potential ways in which transit can improve quality of life in Truro and Colchester.

Transit is an important public service that can connect people to jobs, services, education, recreation, and anywhere else they need or would like to go. It provides greater travel choice, enabling residents to get around without driving or requesting rides from friends, family members, or coworkers. Stakeholder groups and members of the community have consistently agreed through all consultation efforts that it is time for Truro and Colchester to adopt their own public transit system. This study confirms transit is needed, is feasible, and will benefit the community now and into the future for a sustainable, prosperous, and more equitable Truro and Colchester.

# 1 Introduction

The Municipality of the County of Colchester (Colchester) and Town of Truro (Truro) have set out a clear vision for a welcoming and environmentally resilient community that values rural and agricultural areas while being economically prosperous and realizing sustainable growth and development in key areas. The region is growing rapidly, while there is a significant ageing population in both the Town and the County. Yet today, there are limited public transportation options and automobiles are the dominant mode of transportation, with 89.1% of residents commuting to work by automobile as of the 2021 Federal Census.

**Investment in public transit is critical** for the Truro and Colchester to achieve its goals and serve the needs of its diverse population. A convenient, accessible, and intuitive public transit system is essential for enabling sustainable development, realizing economic growth, and connecting residents and visitors to housing, jobs, and critical social and health services.

## 1.1 Background

Public transit is at the centre of a healthy and connected community by providing affordable access to places where people work, play, and live. For those who do not own a car or are unable to drive, transit is not merely a convenience, it is a necessity. Yet, in many smaller communities and rural areas, transit service exists with restrictions, oftentimes due to constrained budgets, long wait-times, or limited resources, making it difficult to provide reliable service and increase ridership.

Currently, transit in Truro and Colchester is provided primarily through door-to-door services operated by Colchester Transportation Cooperative Limited (CTCL). Since 2015, demand for these services has grown significantly. By 2019, CTCL had driven over 117,000 km and transported more than 22,000 individuals. However, CTCL operates as a specialized service rather than a conventional public transit network. Specialized transit refers to services such as Dial-a-Ride and charters that provide transportation for individuals who face barriers to using conventional transit, such as rural seniors or persons with disabilities. CTCL also provides transportation services for anyone who may have transportation needs which cannot be fulfilled through other means like a private automobile, providing an important service to the wider community by ensuring connectivity to the region. Since the 2011 Transit Feasibility Study which assessed the feasibility of a fixed-route transit system in Truro and Colchester, no fixed-route system was implemented, leaving a gap in mobility options for residents. Specialized transit is essential for riders with mobility challenges, but it operates on a demand-responsive model that requires advanced booking and has limited capacity. It cannot efficiently serve the broader community or provide spontaneous travel options. Introducing conventional fixed-route transit would fill this gap by offering predictable, frequent service for all riders, reducing pressure on specialized services and providing evening and weekend services.

These challenges are not unique to Truro and Colchester. Across Nova Scotia, smaller communities are asking the same questions. How can we provide a transit service that serves the destinations that people need most? How can we increase ridership when working within a budget? Other communities in Nova Scotia are taking steps to expand public transit systems. The Nova Scotia Community Transportation Network (NSCTN) is a non-profit organization that provides community-based transportation across rural Nova Scotia. In 2024, NSCTN launched a pilot project to provide recommendations for expanding fixed-route transit service in Antigonish, Bridgewater, and Pictou County, aiming to increase ridership and access to transit by improving route design, operations, and

more. These recommendations are now being implemented by local providers from 2025 to 2028 with communities across Nova Scotia introducing fixed-route transit services, supported by municipal and provincial contributions and \$350,000 in annual funding from the Nova Scotia Department of Energy.

Municipal investment in transit should be viewed as a long-term commitment to achieving municipal strategies and goals. Limited transportation options affect daily life, social connection, and economic participation, often due to gaps in infrastructure, lack of alternatives to driving, and financial or mobility barriers. For households struggling with housing costs, improved transit access can make it easier for residents to reach jobs, education, and essential services without the high cost of vehicle ownership.

As population growth, an ageing population, student needs, low-income residents, and environmental sustainability become increasingly important, it is necessary to provide more transportation choices in the community. If these choices are provided well, residents may decide to shift their travel behaviours in a positive way. Various Canadian Urban Transit Association Issue Papers highlight the benefits of public transit in communities. For the Truro and Colchester specifically, the benefits of introducing a public transit service would be:

- Providing an **affordable way** to access work, school healthcare, and daily needs;
- **Economic growth** through increased labor mobility and support for local businesses and tourism;
- **Personal mobility** for those who cannot or choose not to drive;
- Building **healthy** and **safe** communities; and
- **Environmental sustainability**, through reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

## 1.2 Report Objectives

This Regional Public Transit Feasibility Study articulates the need for public transit in Truro and Colchester. It demonstrates how public transit is critical for supporting population and community growth, serving residents and visitors in an equitable and sustainable manner, and realizing economic and societal benefits. The Study identifies a regional public transit network concept designed for the local context and suited to the needs of residents, businesses, institutions, and communities.

This study:

- **Assess the existing transportation context** to identify existing travel patterns and determine needs and opportunities.
- **Engages with the community and key stakeholders** to understand transportation issues through the lens of locals who understand them best, and collect feedback to inform the recommendations.
- **Establishes a concept and direction for public transit** and identifies a recommended service delivery method and design.
- **Identifies the required implementation steps** for the recommended public transit network concept with consideration for financial sustainability governance, and implementation.
- **Articulates the economic and societal benefits** of public transit and demonstrates the importance of public investment in transit.

## 2 Policy Review

The project team reviewed planning and transportation policy documents from both the Town of Truro and Colchester County. This review enabled the project team to gain a preliminary insight into the travel needs and political priorities of the communities that make up the potential transit service area. This section summarizes the findings of this review.

### 2.1 2011 Transit Feasibility Study

A transit feasibility study was conducted for Truro and Colchester in 2011 by IBI Group, a firm that was acquired by Arcadis in 2022. The IBI-led feasibility study found that operating a public transit system in Truro and Colchester would be feasible, dependent largely upon the local willingness to initiate and then continue operational funding investments for the service. Many of the conditions identified in the study report still apply to Truro and Colchester today including the municipal population, which was stable if slightly declining for many years before recent growth; the availability of transportation services provided by CTCL and private taxi operators; the importance of Truro as a commuter destination for residents of Colchester (especially Central Colchester); and some major destinations including downtown Truro, major commercial centres on the west side of Truro, the Dalhousie Agricultural Campus (AC) in Bible Hill, and the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) campus in Truro.

The initial recommendations of the 2011 study suggested a core service area consisting of the Town of Truro and the communities of Bible Hill, Valley, Salmon River, Truro Heights, Lower Truro, and Millbrook First Nation. These communities have the highest density of population and major trip generators in the region. More information about the current state of the region's demographics is provided in Section 3. The report did not provide explicit recommendations about a network of routes but suggested no fewer than three distinct routes would be required to serve this area. Many of the transportation needs and opportunities identified by this study remain applicable today, with one potential distinction of a higher level of municipal and provincial support than when the study was first undertaken. Since the conclusion of this project, community transit systems have launched across Nova Scotia, with communities including Pictou County, Antigonish, and Bridgewater all establishing their own local services.

### 2.2 Colchester Municipal Planning Strategy

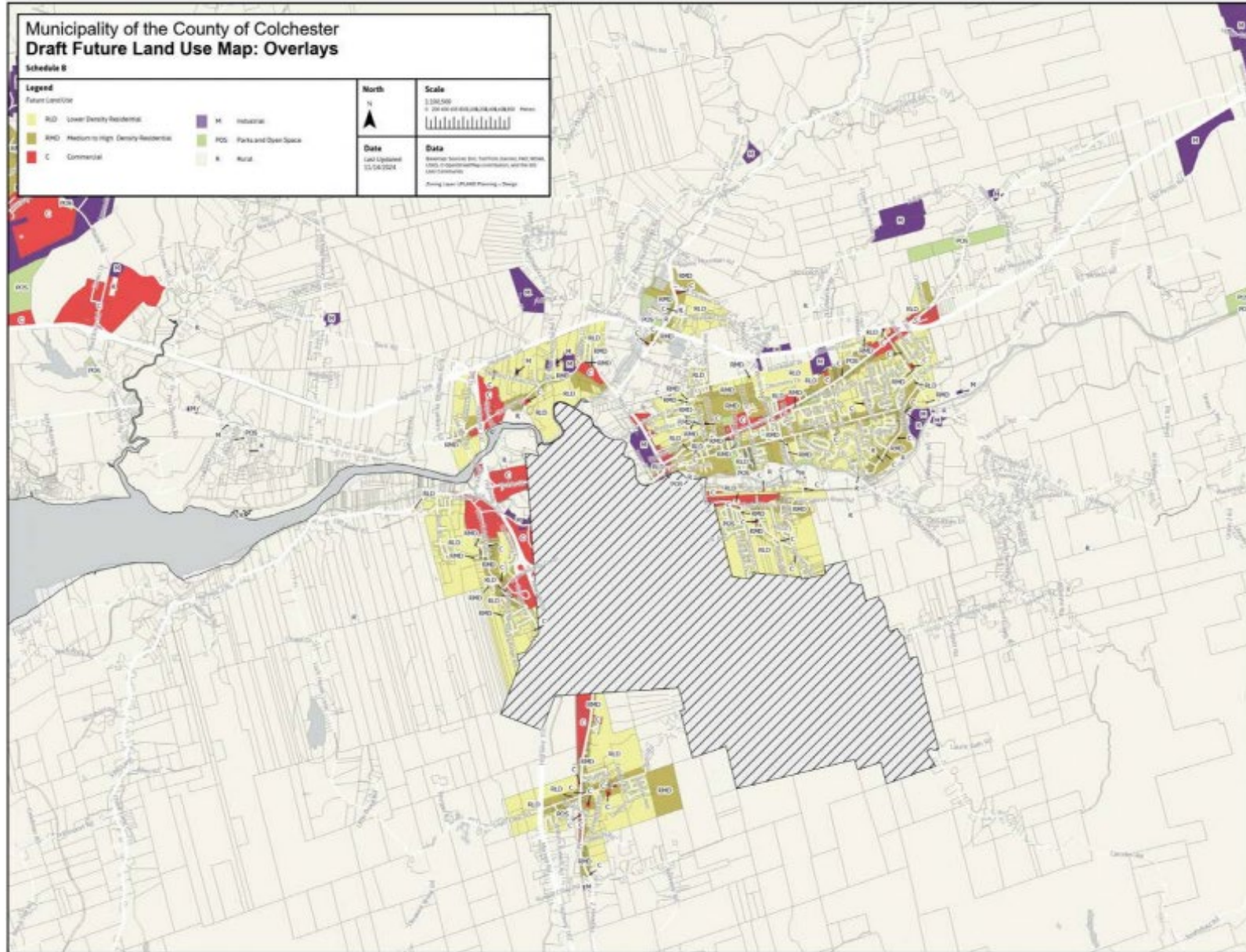
The Municipality of Colchester's Municipal Planning Strategy is a document that guides land use planning, infrastructure investments, and the protection of environmentally sensitive areas in Colchester County. The development of this document was undertaken to provide a consistent and unified land use planning framework across the entirety of Colchester. The Municipal Planning Strategy notes that while Colchester's population has increased by approximately 2,000 over the period from 1991 to 2021, the Municipality's population peaked in 2011 and declined over the following decade. The 2021 Census, while providing an accurate snapshot of population when it was taken, does not fully capture the impact of relocations through and immediately following the COVID-19 pandemic, which have led to new growth pressures in Colchester and across all of Nova Scotia. The Planning Strategy also notes that seasonal residents and postsecondary students, of which Colchester has many, are harder to track through the use of Census data.

Engagement activities undertaken for the Municipal Planning Strategy were extensive, including digital outreach methods that residents could complete on their own schedule and a total of twelve community engagement meetings that took place across Colchester in November of 2023-2025.. Residents expressed a desire to maintain Colchester’s rural character and protect prime agricultural land, and to preserve the natural beauty of Colchester, its environmentally sensitive areas, and its unique and distinct shorelines. A desire was also expressed to introduce public transportation services and reduce the degree to which residents must rely on cars to get around. To accomplish these goals, the Municipality has proposed that growth be directed to designated population centres, expanding existing village centres rather than spreading out further into agricultural or naturalized land.

Many of Colchester’s planned growth centres are located in Central Colchester, which is home to the Municipality’s highest rate of population density and is situated close or adjacent to the Truro. Growth centres in Central Colchester include Bible Hill, Hilden, Lower Truro, Truro Heights, North River, Central Onslow, Upper Onslow, Salmon River, and Valley. Debert, a village northwest of Central Colchester that has experienced significant industrial growth, Tatamagouche, located near Colchester’s northern extremity, and Brookfield, located in south Colchester, are some other anticipated growth centres outside of the central area. A map of growth areas in Central Colchester is shown in Exhibit 2-1 on the following page. Some notable areas of residential growth can be seen in Bible Hill, Valley, Onslow, and Hilden, while industrial and commercial growth in Debert is visible at the western extremity of the map.

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Exhibit 2-1: Planned Growth in Central Colchester



## 2.3 Truro Community Plan

The Truro Community Plan, which was developed in 2023, is an all-encompassing community planning document consisting of a total of nine parts that define the community's needs, goals, and priorities while establishing planning and regulatory documents for the Truro. The Community Plan noted that, like many municipalities across Nova Scotia, Truro has recently experienced rapid growth after many years without this type of pressure. Truro's population growth from the years 2011-2023 was faster than the preceding five decades combined. Truro's population is aging, with a median age of 47.6 years in 2021, while the share of the population living below the Low-Income Measure dropped from 22.6% in 2011 to 19.5% in 2021. This, however, remains above the provincial average of 14.9%.

The Community Plan received significant public input, with the Truro, Let's Connect survey receiving a total of 1,784 responses. Public transit ranked as a prominent priority for residents in the survey results. When asked about the most important environmental actions Truro could take, increasing public transportation options was voted by respondents as the most important, while public transit was rated as Truro's second most-important budgetary priority behind re-paving roads and just ahead of constructing bike lanes and trails. Notably, all three of the top choices to this question related to the broad issue of transportation. Funding contributions from senior levels of government are likely to be important for residents when it comes to introducing transit service, as public support for cutting services or increasing taxes was limited.

The Municipal Planning Strategy, which is the sixth part of the Community Plan, identifies numerous categories of land use designations across Truro. These include Downtown Core, Urban Corridor, and Urban Growth areas, where travel demand is high and may continue to increase, regional service and business industrial areas, which generate travel demand related to employment, institutional, or retail uses, and future growth areas, where Truro's future growth is likely to be directed. Transit-friendly development and transit service are emphasized as important points for future growth areas, which are likely to be outside walking distance of existing services in Truro. Concept designs are shown in the Municipal Planning Strategy for two growth areas: one located south of William Barnhill Drive in the south of Truro, and one located east of Wood Street along Centennial Drive in Truro's east. These are presented in Exhibit 2-2.

Exhibit 2-2: Conceptual Growth Areas in Truro

Figure 11.5: South End Future Growth Area Conceptual Plan



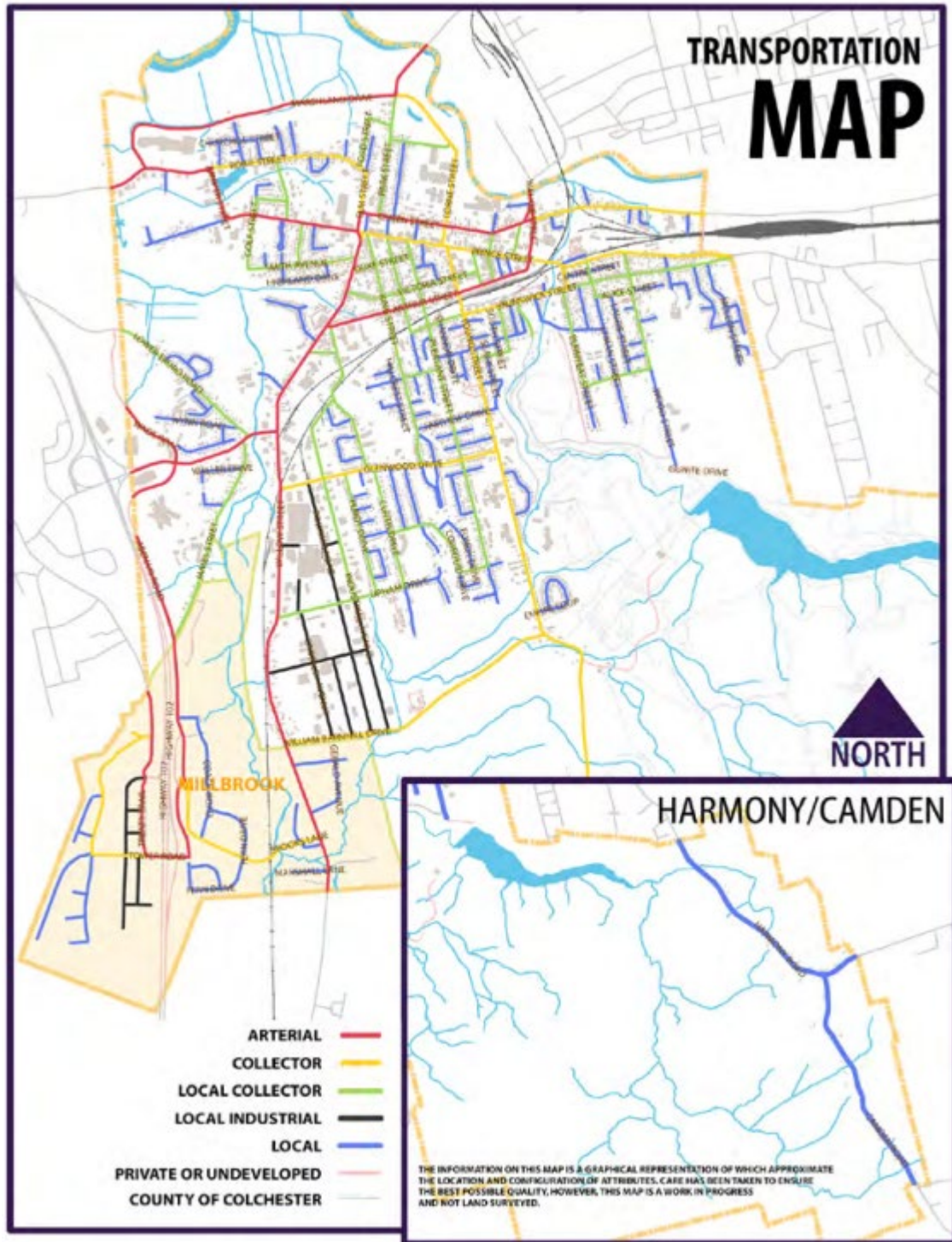
Figure 11.4: East End Future Growth Area Conceptual Plan



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An accompanying transportation map is provided in the Municipal Planning Strategy, categorizing each road and street within Truro and Millbrook First Nation. Street categorization is an important aspect of transit service planning, to ensure that appropriate roads and streets are selected for use by transit vehicles. Arterial, collector, and industrial streets are generally designed to a higher standard than local streets in terms of overall width, turning radius for larger vehicles, and pavement standards that allow them to be used by heavier vehicles without incurring significant wear and tear. These factors are important when assessing the suitability of the street network for transit service. Across all transit service concepts, transit routes will avoid the use of local streets unless specifically approved or advised by municipal staff, as local streets are generally not considered to be appropriate for transit vehicles. The assumed classification of roads and streets in Truro is shown on the following page in Exhibit 2-3.

Exhibit 2-3: Road Classifications of Truro



## Final Report

Public transit constituted such a strong theme in the Truro Community Plan that it received its own specific set of community action recommendations in the closing section of the report. The Plan emphasizes the urgency with which the community has begun to request a public transit system. These recommendations are shown in Exhibit 2-4 and Exhibit 2-5. Recommendations refer to subjects as varied as engagement, communications, revenue and funding sources, and implementation.

Exhibit 2-4: Public Transit Recommendations (Truro Community Plan)

# Public Transit



## Recommendation No. 1

Bring a motion to Council that compels staff to work on the development of a public transit system that serves the needs of Truro.

## Recommendation No. 2

Explore resources and collaborations to enable dedicated staffing time (external, internal, or contracted) to lead system development research and project management.

## Recommendation No. 3

Meet with elected representatives and senior staff of Millbrook First Nation and the Municipality of Colchester to discuss early collaboration of system development.

## Recommendation No. 4

Meet with the leadership of CTLC to inform them of the project and express openness to collaboration.

## Recommendation No. 5

Revisit the Regional Transit Feasibility Study of 2011 with a view to updating and expanding its scope and data content. Assess rural and small-town exemplars that have established themselves in the period since the study. Consider external contracting for this element and possibly an economic impact study. Establish a research agenda to include:

- funding opportunities and scenarios, including green funds and sponsorship/naming revenue potential,
- regulatory context, including Utility and Review Board requirements and any exemptions for pilot projects,
- vehicle options,
- mobile app, and dispatch app options,
- route and frequency options,
- ownership structure options, including Nova Scotia's Community Interest Company structure,
- align infrastructure development needs with those of the Active Transportation Plan,
- do system costing, including capital and operating costs such as insurance, fuel, and properly paid labour, as well as potential revenues.

Exhibit 2-5: Public Transit Recommendations (Continued)



**Recommendation No. 6**  
Develop communications materials suitable for public and targeted presentation that describe and promote viable system options. Develop social marketing and branding strategies that convey a fun, reliable, affordable, and eco-friendly bus system that will appeal to diverse users, including those currently relying on private vehicles.

**Recommendation No. 7**  
Stage public and targeted sessions to gather input on and create support for a public transit system. Consider partnering with various organizations such as service clubs, community organizations, TCPEP and/or the Chamber of Commerce, Dalhousie and the Truro Campus of the Nova Scotia Community College to co-host gatherings. Invite potential institutional and corporate sponsors and follow-up with private meetings. Propose contracts to Dalhousie and to Community Services. Prepare for disapproval from local taxi interests by showing mutual benefit.

**Recommendation No. 8**  
Meet with federal and provincial elected representatives to secure support.

**Recommendation No. 9**  
Inform Councils of Truro, Colchester, and Millbrook of progress on the initiative. Formulate motions for approval of system development.

**Recommendation No. 10**  
Pursue non-municipal funding for the system.

**Recommendation No. 11**  
Implement the new public transit system with a sustained branding and communication effort, rewarding sponsors with exposure (also on vehicles, uniforms, bus stops).

## 2.4 Colchester Transportation Cooperative Limited (CTCL) Business Plan

CTCL, the non-profit accessible community transportation provider in Colchester County, developed a six-year business plan in 2021. At the time, the organization was still deeply feeling the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and planning for an uncertain future. CTCL developed ridership and business projections for different scenarios, as the extent to which ridership would recover following the pandemic was not known at the time.

Many of CTCL's regular users live in or close to Truro. The business plan noted that of the new clients that registered with CTCL between April 2018 and December 2021, 73% lived within the Town of Truro. Recognizing that CTCL's service was approaching its maximum capacity prior to the onset of the pandemic, the Plan recommended three potential ways for CTCL to expand its service: extending service to weekday evenings and Saturdays, developing fixed routes with regular schedules in Truro and Central Colchester, and developing fixed or flexible routes between Truro and key destinations around Colchester. If these service expansions were to be provided by a public transit service, it could potentially act as a pressure release for CTCL, allowing it to dedicate resources to community members who are not able to use conventional fixed-route transit. In discussing the feasibility of conventional transit, the Plan noted that CTCL could act as the operator of public transit in Truro and Colchester if desired, as CHAD Transit does in Pictou County. The business plan also recommended enhanced marketing for CTCL including a change of its logo, which has since been completed.

## 2.5 Truro-Colchester + You. Moving Accessibility Forward

In 2022, municipalities across the Colchester area including the Municipality of Colchester, Town of Truro, Town of Stewiacke, Village of Bible Hill, and Village of Tatamagouche partnered together to develop an Accessibility Action Plan for the purpose of improving accessibility across the region. The report notes that one in three Nova Scotians live with a disability, the highest rate in all of Canada. In engagement activities for the Accessibility Action Plan, public transportation was identified as a major barrier for residents due to the lack of it in the region. While the service provided by CTCL is a success and a crucial resource for the community, booking trips can be challenging and not all community residents can necessarily use it due to limited capacity of buses and service designed largely for door-to-door service. The report recommends adopting public transit, citing existing systems in Cape Breton Regional Municipality and the Annapolis Valley (Kings Transit) as successes to emulate. While neither system can be all things to all residents, each system does provide reasonable service to a significant portion of their municipalities.

Many recommendations in the report that broadly apply to public services or the general life experience of community members can be applied to public transit as well. The report noted the importance of access to food, with groceries generally costing more at smaller stores in the villages of Colchester, while the most affordable options are located in or very close to Truro. Some major supermarkets in and around Truro include Sobeys Fundy Trail, Atlantic Superstore, Sobeys Prince Street, and Walmart Supercentre. For residents of Truro and Central Colchester, public transit could open up improved access to more affordable food.

Transit, like any public service, should be designed with as few barriers as possible, another recurring theme in the report. In moving this study forward, the project team will endeavour to design a transit system with accessible vehicles, accessible stops, and a network that is easy to use and recognizable by residents.

## **2.6 Town of Truro Municipal Housing Needs Report, Colchester Municipal Housing Needs Report, and Truro-Colchester Affordable Housing Needs & Supply Study**

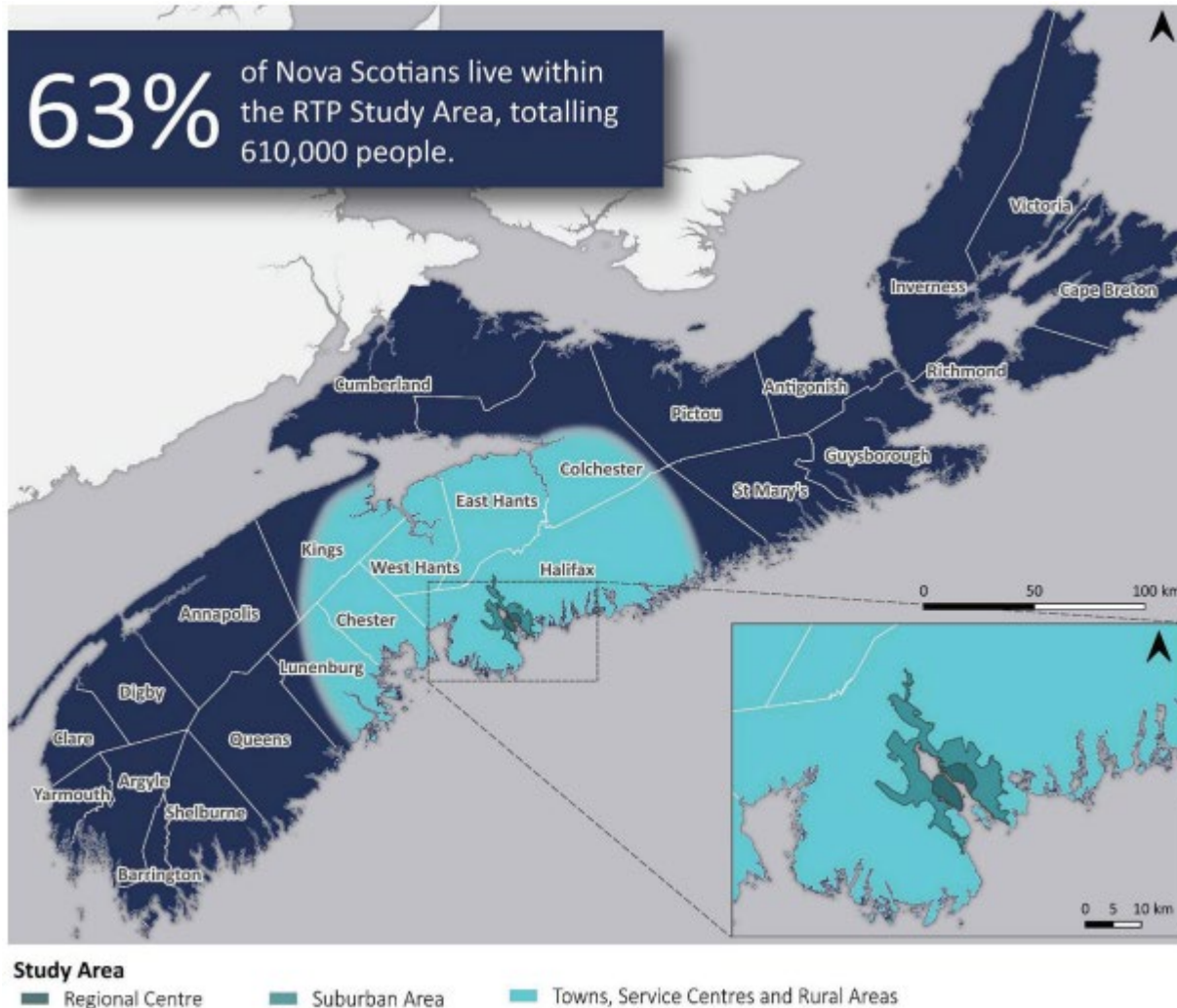
Two studies were conducted regarding the level of need and supply of affordable housing in Truro and Colchester across the years of 2021 and 2022. Key findings of each report included a need for more housing units across the region as a result of recent population growth, an aging population that is not working as much, an aging housing stock that includes some units in a below-average state of repair, a need for non-market housing in addition to market housing, and rising rent costs. Core housing need, which occurs when a household pays more than 30% of its gross before-tax income on housing that is also overcrowded and in need of repairs, affects 7% of households across the region including 14% of households in Truro, 22% of Truro renters, 18% of Truro single-parent households, and 18% of Indigenous residents. Unless housing starts and completions exceed the anticipated rate of construction, Truro and Colchester will continue to experience a housing shortage, which underscores the need for both more housing and for improved transportation options that could reduce household transportation costs.

Some additional key takeaways in these reports include high student populations in the region and elevated feelings of isolation in more remote communities. As of 2022, NSCC and Dalhousie AC were noted to have 700 and 1,000 active students respectively, representing a substantial share of the region's population and an important demographic for transit services to consider. The Regional Affordable Housing Needs & Supply Study placed an emphasis on the Village of Tatamagouche to identify the needs of a unique community in the region. Compared to the rest of Colchester, Tatamagouche's relatively small population of just under 700 residents as of 2021 has a much higher average age (57) and a higher proportion of low-income households (31.2%). In communities like this, improved transportation options can help residents to reduce their own transportation costs and to enhance the mobility of seniors, particularly if they are aging out of driving.

## **2.7 Link Nova Scotia Regional Transportation Plan**

This report was received later in the study but has been incorporated into this section as an important reference tool for regional transportation planning around and beyond Colchester. Link Nova Scotia, formerly the Joint Regional Transportation Authority (JRTA), is a provincial Crown corporation that is responsible for long-range strategic transportation planning across all of Nova Scotia. The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), which is centred on Halifax and covers communities within roughly one hour by car, encompasses a region that is home to approximately 63% of Nova Scotians. This region, which includes Truro, Millbrook First Nation, and southern Colchester, is shown in Exhibit 2-6.

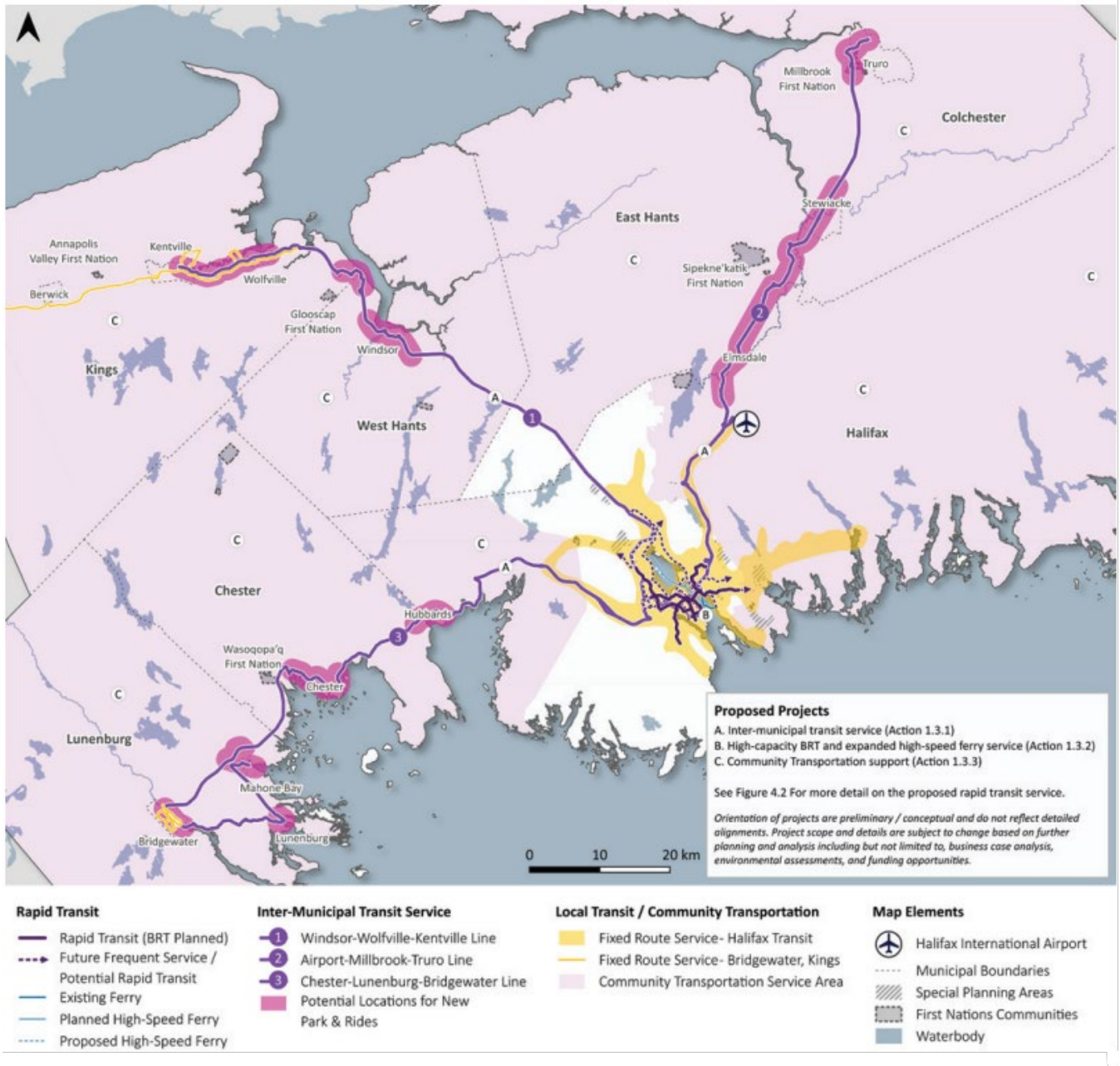
Exhibit 2-6: RTP Study Area



The RTP includes a significant transit component in its set of recommendations. Within the urban area of the Halifax Regional Municipality, a network of rapid transit and ferry services are planned. Rapid Transit would be envisioned as BRT, or Bus Rapid Transit, a higher-capacity and higher-speed type of bus service that may operate in its own right-of-way or dedicated lane and typically with a wider spacing between stops than a local bus. The northern extent of this planned network is the Airport, which would act as a connection point to an inter-municipal transit service operating through East Hants and Colchester including Stewiacke, Millbrook First Nation, and Truro. The report also recommends developing a sustainable funding model with Community Transportation Services, such as CTCL, across different levels of government to improve access to healthcare, employment, services, and connect to fixed-route services for longer trips.

A map of the envisioned regional public transit network is shown in Exhibit 2-7.

Exhibit 2-7: RTP Future Transit Network



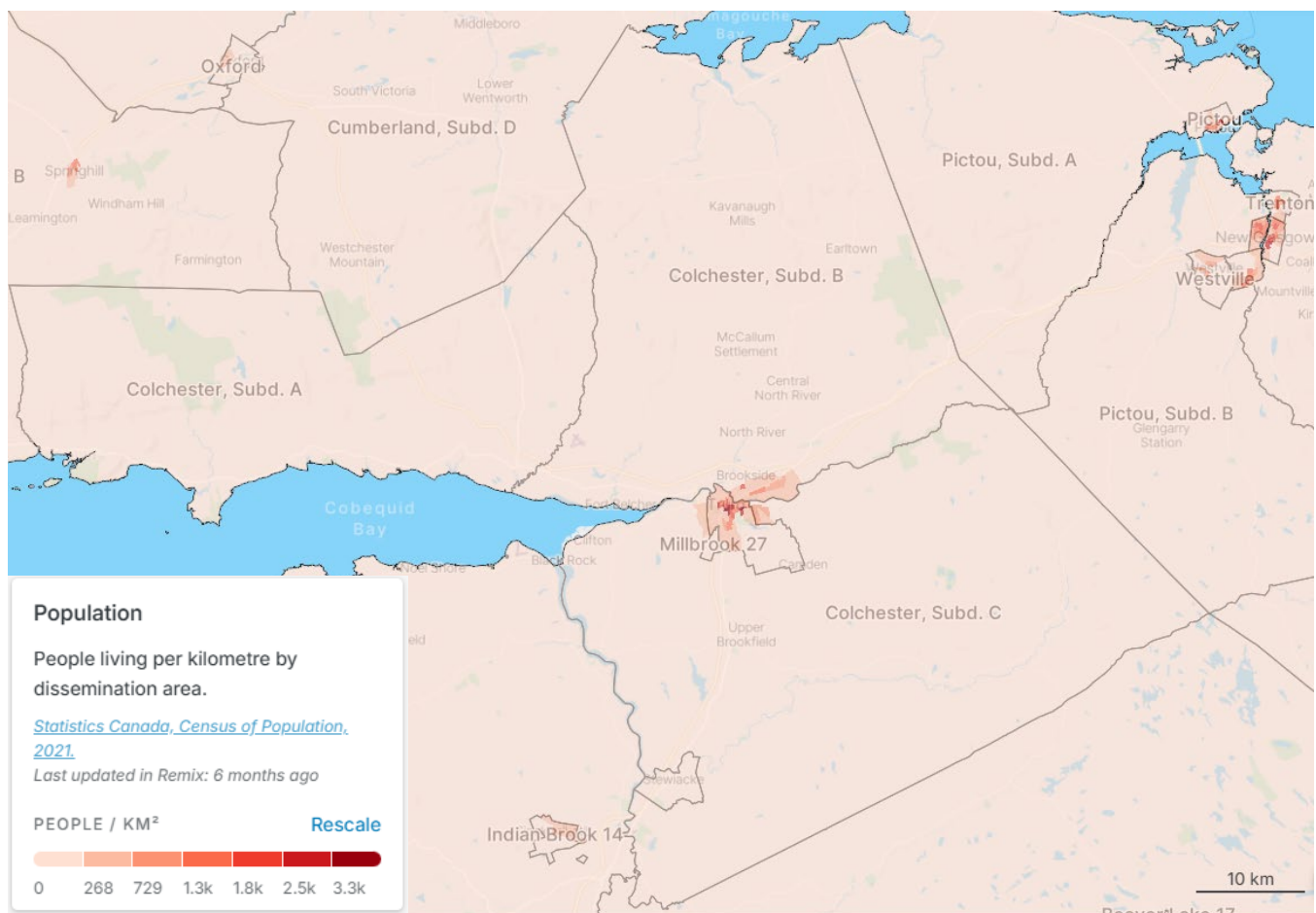
### 3 Demographic and Trip Generator Review

To gain an insight into how travel needs and travel demand might be distributed about the region, the project team undertook a review of local demographic data and travel demand factors. This review used data from the 2021 federal Census, a qualitative list of major destinations based on previous work in other jurisdictions, and medical transportation travel data that was generously provided by Nova Scotia Public Health. The results of this review are summarized in this section.

#### 3.1 Demographic Data

Demographic data from the federal Census of Population, last conducted in 2021, was used to inform a review of both transit demand and equity factors. Density of overall population was measured to analyze where the highest number of people would be travelling within a given area, while more specific population data was analyzed to determine where transit service could be focused based on where equity-seeking populations live within the study area. Some of these equity-seeking communities, such as seniors and low-income residents, are also more likely to use transit, contributing to overall demand for the service. An overview of population density across the study area is shown in Exhibit 3-1.

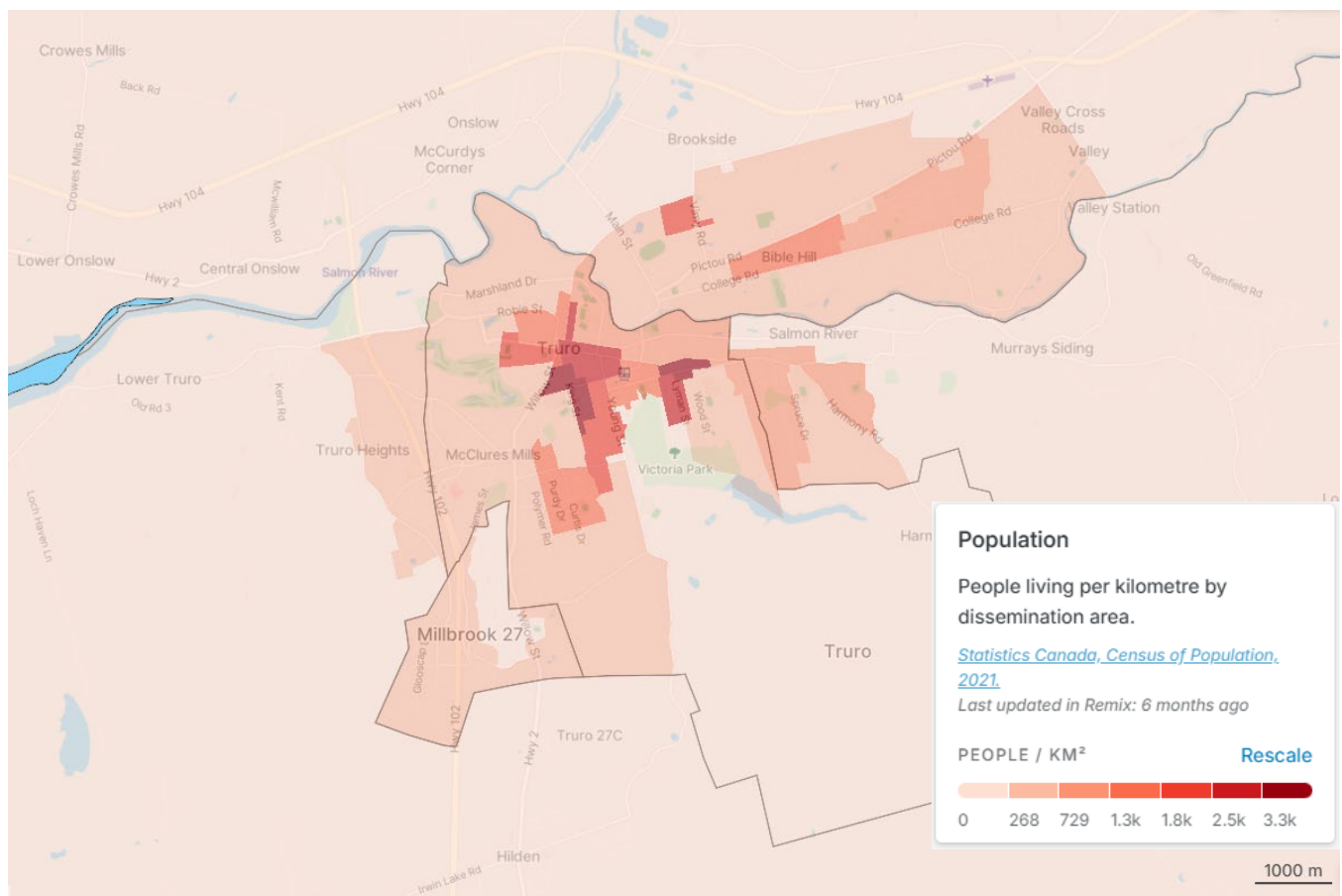
Exhibit 3-1: Population Density in Colchester



The population of Colchester is quite spread out throughout most of the Municipality. There is a clear concentration of people in the middle of the region, corresponding to Central Colchester and Truro. This suggests that demand for travel and for public transit will be the highest and most concentrated in urbanized areas.

Zooming in on Truro and Central Colchester, which is anticipated to form the core transit service area, we can see that population density in the region is at its highest in downtown Truro and in the south and east ends of town. Other areas with somewhat higher population density include the west end of Truro, Bible Hill, Salmon River, and Valley. Millbrook First Nation and Truro Heights have lower levels of population density compared to some urbanized areas, but more density than rural ones. This is visualized below in Exhibit 3-2.

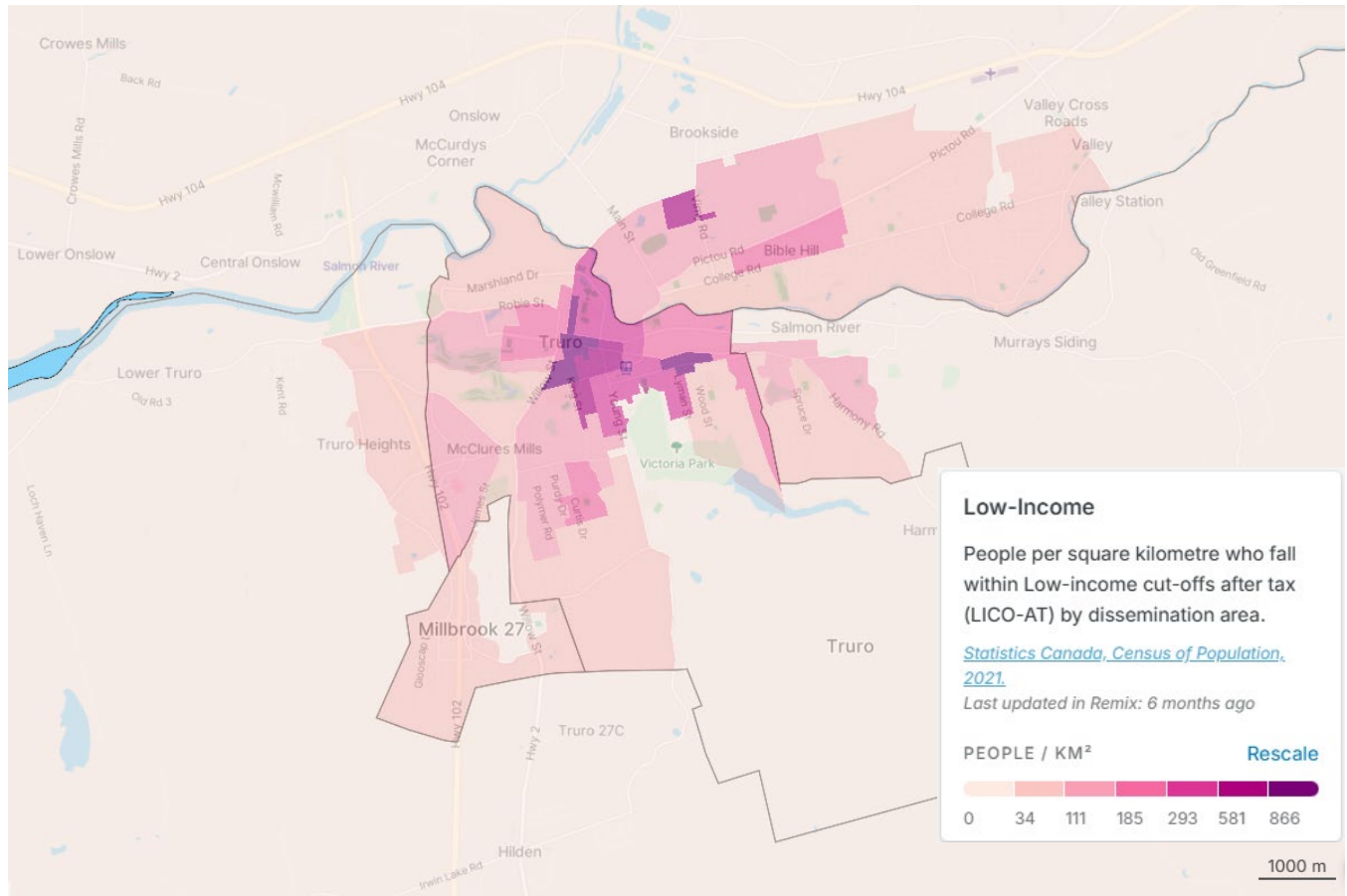
Exhibit 3-2: Population Density of Truro and Central Colchester



### Low-Income Residents

Low-income households are a key demographic to understand in developing a transit service network as transit service can pose the greatest benefit for this population group. As observed in the policy review, lower-income individuals are more likely to experience core housing need or housing insecurity, and the cost of owning and operating a car can often eat significantly into a household's budget. Providing public transit can alleviate household expenses for low-income residents by reducing or eliminating the need to drive, thus enabling people to allocate more money to housing, food, discretionary spending, or savings. A map of the density of low-income populations in Truro and Central Colchester is shown in Exhibit 3-3.

Exhibit 3-3: Population Density of Low-Income Residents in Truro and Central Colchester

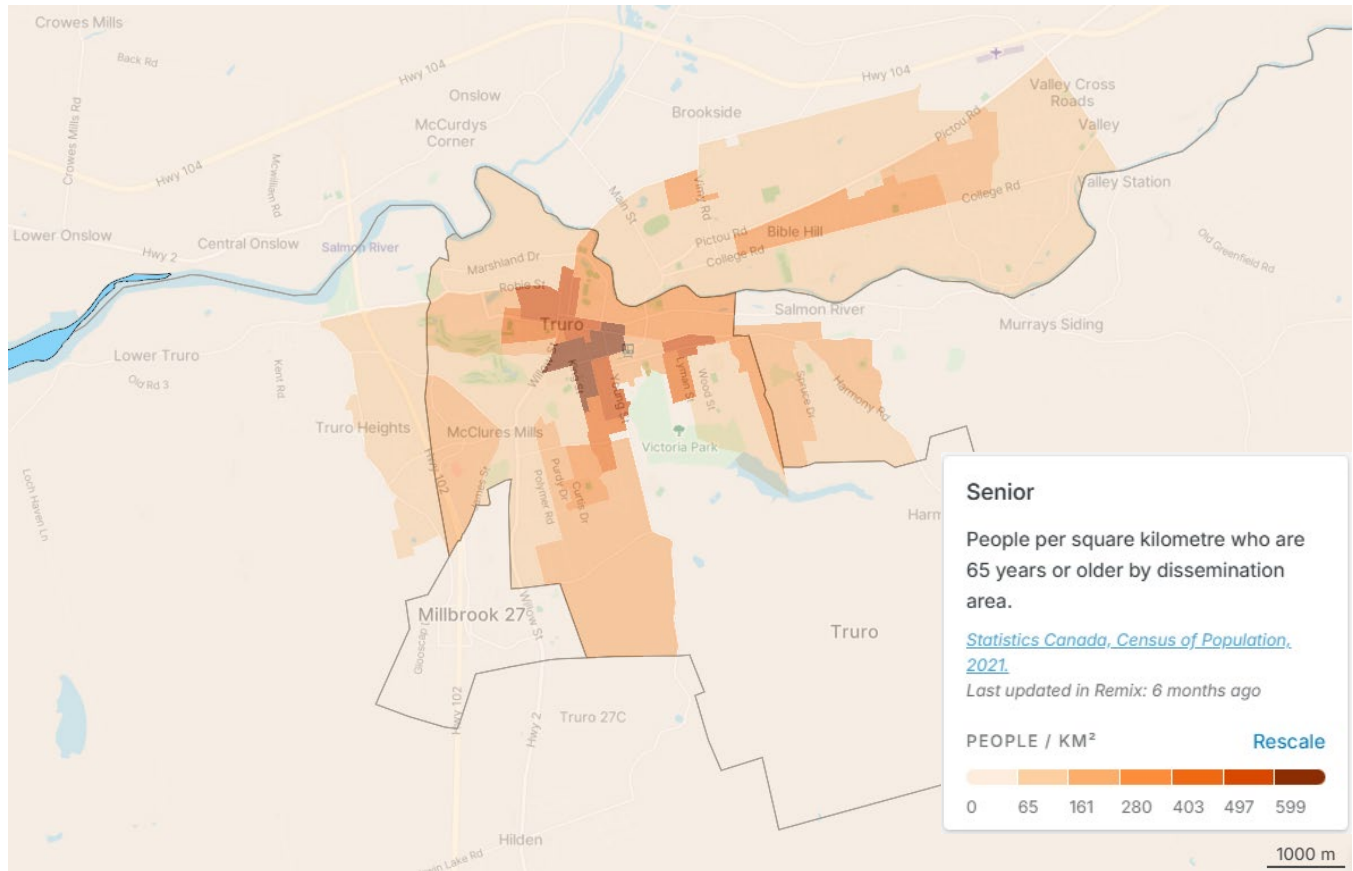


As this map shows, the density of lower-income populations correlates with the overall density of population, but it is not a direct one-to-one relationship. Low-income residents are primarily concentrated in downtown Truro, the east end of Truro, and Bible Hill, with low-income populations also noticeable in Salmon River and west and south Truro. Millbrook First Nation, Truro Heights, and Valley also have lower-income populations, albeit at a lower level of density compared to more centrally located communities.

**Seniors**

Seniors are an important group to consider when planning transit services, as seniors may also benefit from transit at a rate exceeding that of the general population. Public transit can provide a greater degree of transportation independence for senior citizens, particularly for those who are aging out of driving. By providing travel options that do not require the use of a personal car, a well-designed transit system can promote aging in place for seniors, allowing them to remain in their homes and maintain their own personal autonomy for a longer period of time. A map showing the density of senior populations in Truro and Central Colchester is shown in Exhibit 3-4.

Exhibit 3-4: Population Density of Seniors in Truro and Central Colchester

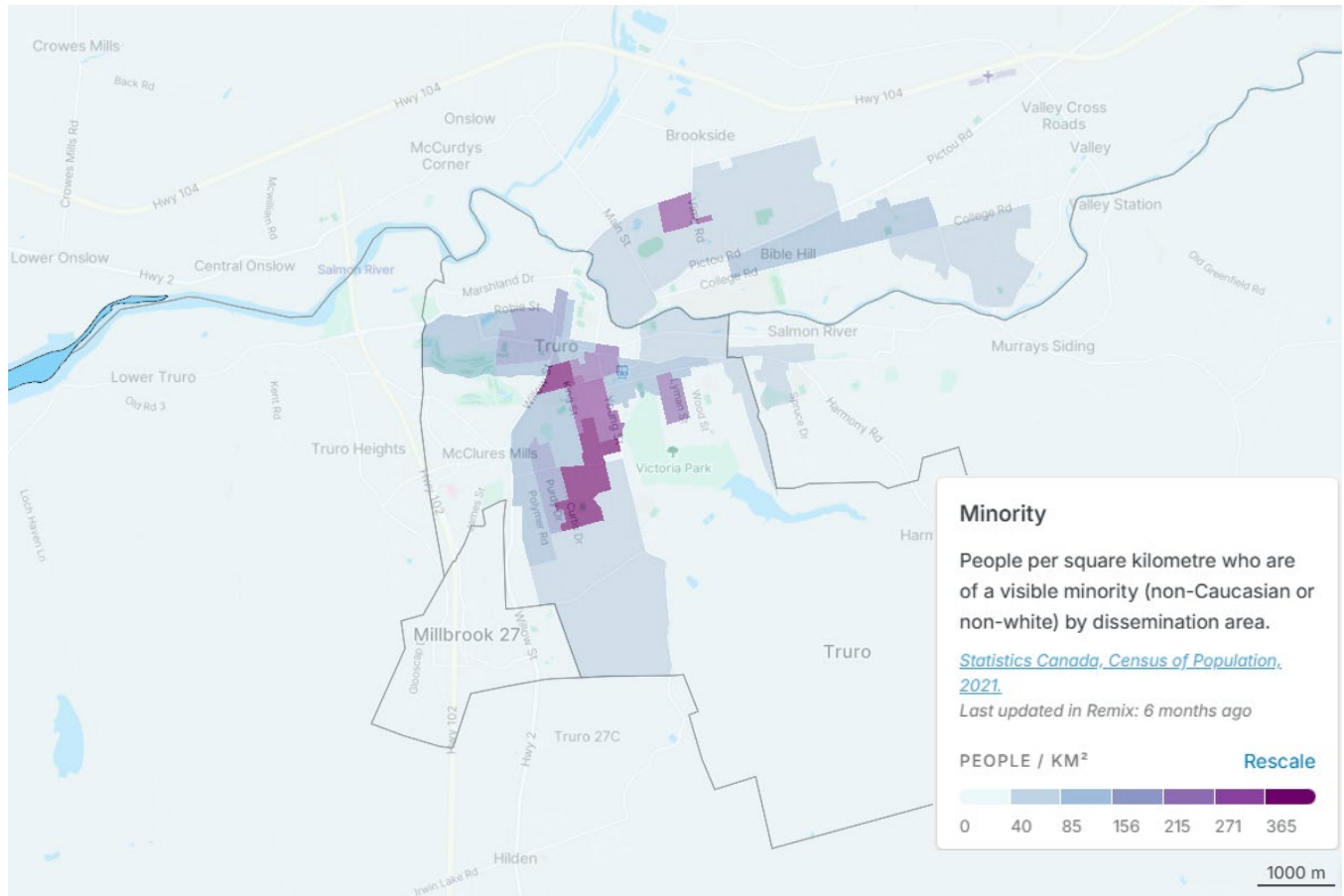


While a significant presence of seniors does exist in downtown Truro, seniors are spread a bit more throughout the Town and the region as a whole. Truro’s east and south ends, particularly along the Young Street corridor, have elevated senior populations, as does Bible Hill from just east of Vimy Rd all the way to the village line. Salmon River and Valley also have senior populations of note. Millbrook First Nation, which generally has a lower average age than Truro and Colchester, has a much lower density of seniors than other urban or partially urban communities in the study area.

**Visible Minority**

Visible minority residents, defined by the federal Census as populations that are non-Caucasian or non-white, may be important to understand from an equity perspective when planning transit. Some public services in Canada have historically not been allocated equitably, with visible or ethnic minorities facing increased rates of discrimination or marginalization compared to the ethnic majority population. It can thus be important to understand where minority communities live when planning transit to ensure that such communities do not feel ignored or passed over when routing designs are proposed. A map of the population density of visible or ethnic minority residents is shown in Exhibit 3-5.

Exhibit 3-5: Population Density of Visible Minority Residents in Truro and Central Colchester



The south end of Truro shows prominently on this map, with the highest rate of visible minority residents along the Young Street and King Street, extending south towards Upham Drive. The east end of Truro, Bible Hill, and the west end of Truro also have noticeable pockets of visible minority residents including West Prince Street, which is home to Truro’s African Nova Scotian community.

Indigenous persons are not considered visible or ethnic minority residents by the federal Census. Millbrook First Nation, as an Indigenous community, is important to recognize and to involve in the service planning process to promote reconciliation and greater cooperation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Millbrook First Nation will be engaged separately by the Truro and Colchester to determine if the community wants transit service and, if so, what that service should look like and the role the First Nation could have as a partner in funding and operating transit.

### 3.2 Commuting Flow Data

In addition to studying Census population data, the Census also can be instructive in determining where residents around the study area are working. Travel to work represents a crucial type of travel for public transit to serve in order to enable residents to go about their lives more conveniently, and it can also provide a general indication of broader travel patterns around the community. The data is presented in Exhibit 3-6.

Exhibit 3-6: Commuter Flow Data in Truro and Colchester

Place of Residence	to Truro	to Colchester, Subd. A	to Colchester, Subd. B	to Colchester, Subd. C	to Millbrook First Nation	Total
<b>Truro</b>	2,495	25	505	265	75	<b>3,365</b>
<b>Colchester, Subd. A</b>	285	190	310	60	10	<b>855</b>
<b>Colchester, Subd. B</b>	2,470	45	2,245	525	90	<b>5,375</b>
<b>Colchester, Subd. C</b>	1,600	15	550	915	90	<b>3,170</b>
<b>Millbrook First Nation</b>	20	0	0	10	105	<b>135</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,870</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>3,610</b>	<b>1,775</b>	<b>370</b>	

The Census commuter data breaks the Municipality of Colchester into three subdivisions. These can be interpreted as:

- **Colchester, Subdivision A:** Consists of that part of the Municipality that is located west of the Debert River. Some settlement areas include Great Village and Bass River. With an overall population of 3,800, it is the least populated subdivision of Colchester.
- **Colchester, Subdivision B:** Consists of that part of the Municipality that is located north of the Salmon River and Truro, and east of the Debert River. Some settlement areas include Bible Hill, Onslow, Valley, Debert, and Tatamagouche. With an overall population of 19,800, it is the most populous subdivision of Colchester.
- **Colchester, Subdivision C:** Consists of that part of the Municipality that is located south of the Salmon River and Truro. Some settlement areas include Hilden, Brookfield, and the Town of Stewiacke, which is not counted in the subdivision’s data. The overall population of this subdivision is 12,500.

The table applies shading to distinguish internal commuters who work in the same Census place as they live. For many subdivisions in the table above, internal commuters are either the biggest group or the second biggest group. Commuters living in Truro primarily commute to other places in Truro, though Colchester B and Colchester C represent destinations of significance as well. Truro is the most prominent destination for commuters across the study area, with a total of 6,870 workers counted.

As the most populous subdivision in the study area, Colchester B has the highest number of outbound commuters counted, at 5,375. Truro and internal trips within Colchester B are the most prominent destinations with very similar volumes, while Colchester C is also a significant destination. Colchester B is the second most-popular commuter destination in the study area after Truro at 3,610 total trips, with some significant employers in the area located in Bible Hill and Debert. Commuters in Colchester C primarily commute to Truro, with a total that slightly exceeds the combined total of internal commuters to Colchester C and commuters to Colchester B, which remain significant destinations.

As the least populous subdivision in Colchester, Colchester A has a smaller number of commuters than Colchester B or Colchester C. Colchester B is the most popular destination at 310 trips, which may be related to an elevated number of jobs in and around Debert. Truro is the second most prominent destination at 285 trips, while internal commuters within Colchester A make up 190 total trips. Residents of Millbrook First Nation primarily commute to jobs on the First Nation, with some commuters travelling to the nearby destinations of Truro or Colchester C.

### 3.3 Trip Generators

The project team developed a qualitative list of major trip generators and areas of focus in the study area. These consist of major destinations that align with some of the major trip types that transit riders will take and frequent themes of customer service requests in other jurisdictions that operate transit, thus corresponding to the types of destinations that the service should be designed to serve. These consist of, but may not necessarily be limited to, the following:

#### Transportation Providers

Other transportation services are provided in the study area for the purpose of travelling to other communities outside of Truro and Colchester. By connecting their stations with a transit system, riders throughout the service area will be able to connect to these other transportation services. The **VIA Rail** station, located in downtown Truro, enables residents to connect to the national rail network. Service from Truro is provided to Halifax in the south and to destinations further west including Amherst, Moncton, Miramichi, and other locations outside of Atlantic Canada. For travel to destinations closer to Truro, **Maritime Bus** operates an intercity bus station on Willow Street southwest of downtown Truro. The network of Maritime Bus service uses the Truro station as a hub, providing connections in all directions and allowing customers to travel throughout Atlantic Canada. Trips are available west towards Oxford, Amherst, and New Brunswick, east towards New Glasgow, Antigonish, and Cape Breton, and south towards Stewiacke, Elmsdale, and Halifax.

#### Institutional and Community Destinations

For transit providers across Canada, postsecondary schools represent major travel destinations. Students are a key ridership driver and can represent a source of revenue if user pass agreements can be reached between postsecondary institutions and transit service providers. With almost 2,000 students between the two, **Dalhousie AC** and **Nova Scotia Community College** are important destinations to serve with transit. **Cobequid Educational Centre** may also figure prominently in the travel demand of residents. High schools are important to serve with transit whether student transportation is provided or not, as many youths cannot always drive where they are going and students may have before or after-school programs that don't align with school bus times.

Major hospitals like **Colchester East Hants Health Centre** are also critical to serve with transit, both to enable residents to access appointments and medical services and to serve hospital workers, as hospitals are often major employers in the regions they are based. Recreation centres such as **Rath Eastlink Community Centre**, located just across the street from the hospital, and **Douglas Street Recreation Centre** in south Truro are also important destinations for residents to enjoy an improved quality of life and to serve employees of the centres.

Government services represent important destinations for communities. These trips may not always need to take place as often as work, education, or food-related trips, but they represent an important part of residents' lives nonetheless. **Service Canada** and **Access Nova Scotia** provide important services that residents depend on, and as such are considered key destinations to connect to with transit.

#### Commercial Uses

Major shopping centres such as **The Hub** and **Fundy Trail** will be important to serve with transit. Retail destinations such as these are important places for community residents to run crucial errands and they also generate a significant number of jobs. Food security, as identified in the policy review and often observed in other jurisdictions, is an important consideration for service planning to ensure transit riders who are outside walking distance to a major supermarket can access a place to purchase affordable groceries. Riders from the villages of

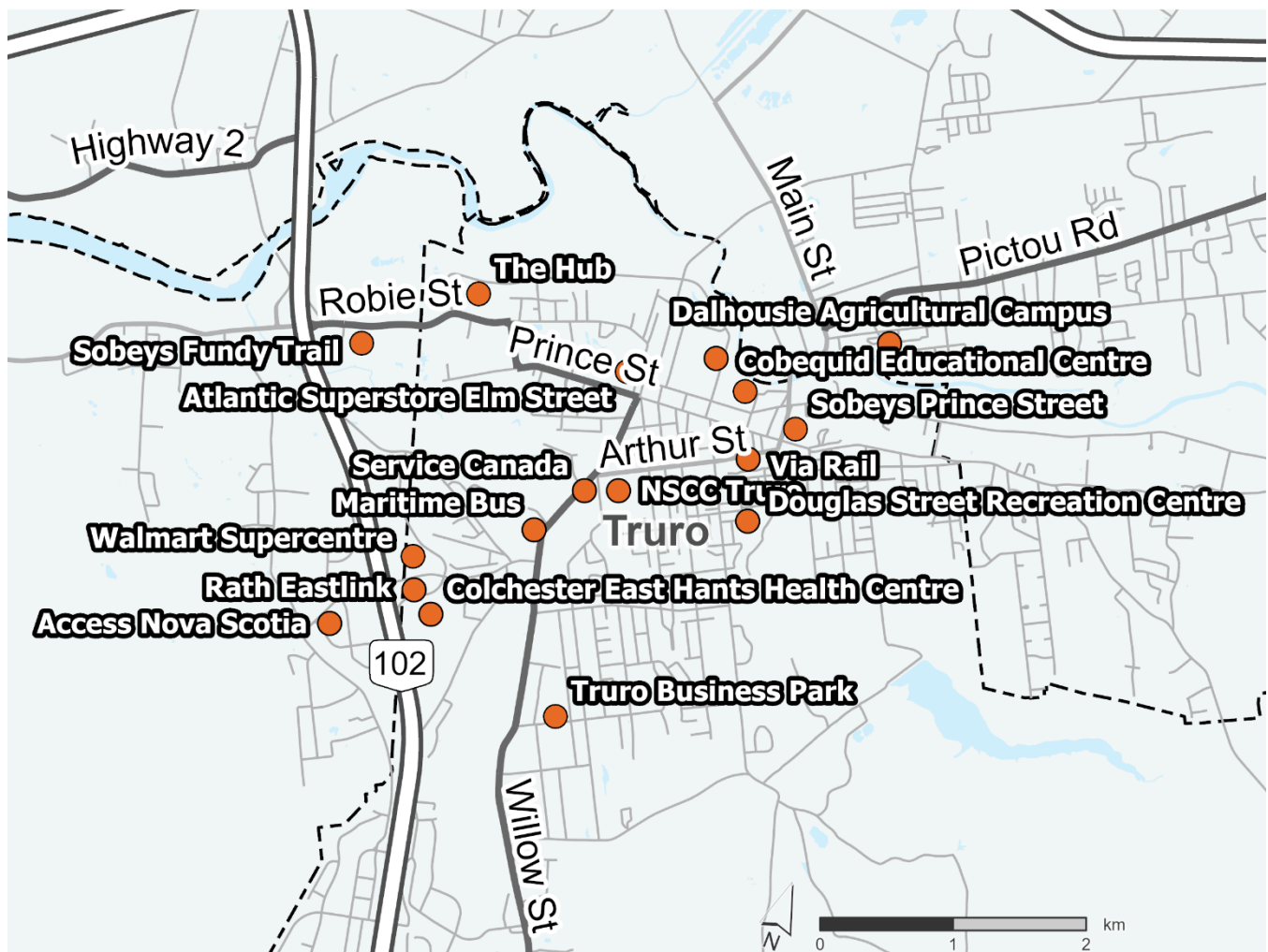
Colchester will benefit from this type of access as well. Key supermarkets to consider in the study area include **Sobeys Fundy Trail, Atlantic Superstore, Sobeys Prince Street, and Walmart Supercentre.**

### Industrial Employers

Industrial areas provide a large number of jobs for the community and connecting them to the transit network can open up opportunities for job seekers while connecting employers to a broader potential pool of candidates. Truro's south end and Debert are major industrial hubs in the region, with some major employers in south Truro located in the **Truro Business Park**. Examples include **Agropur Cooperative, Intertape Polymer Group, and Asante Logistics** among many others. Several major employers are located in the **Debert Business Park**, with a noticeable concentration of jobs in the Lancaster Crescent area as well, including distribution centres for **Sobeys** and **Home Hardware**. **Stanfield's**, a long-time employer in the region, is unique among industrial employers for having a presence in downtown Truro.

A high-level overview of trip generators in the central study region is shown below.

Exhibit 3-7: Trip Generators of Truro and Central Colchester

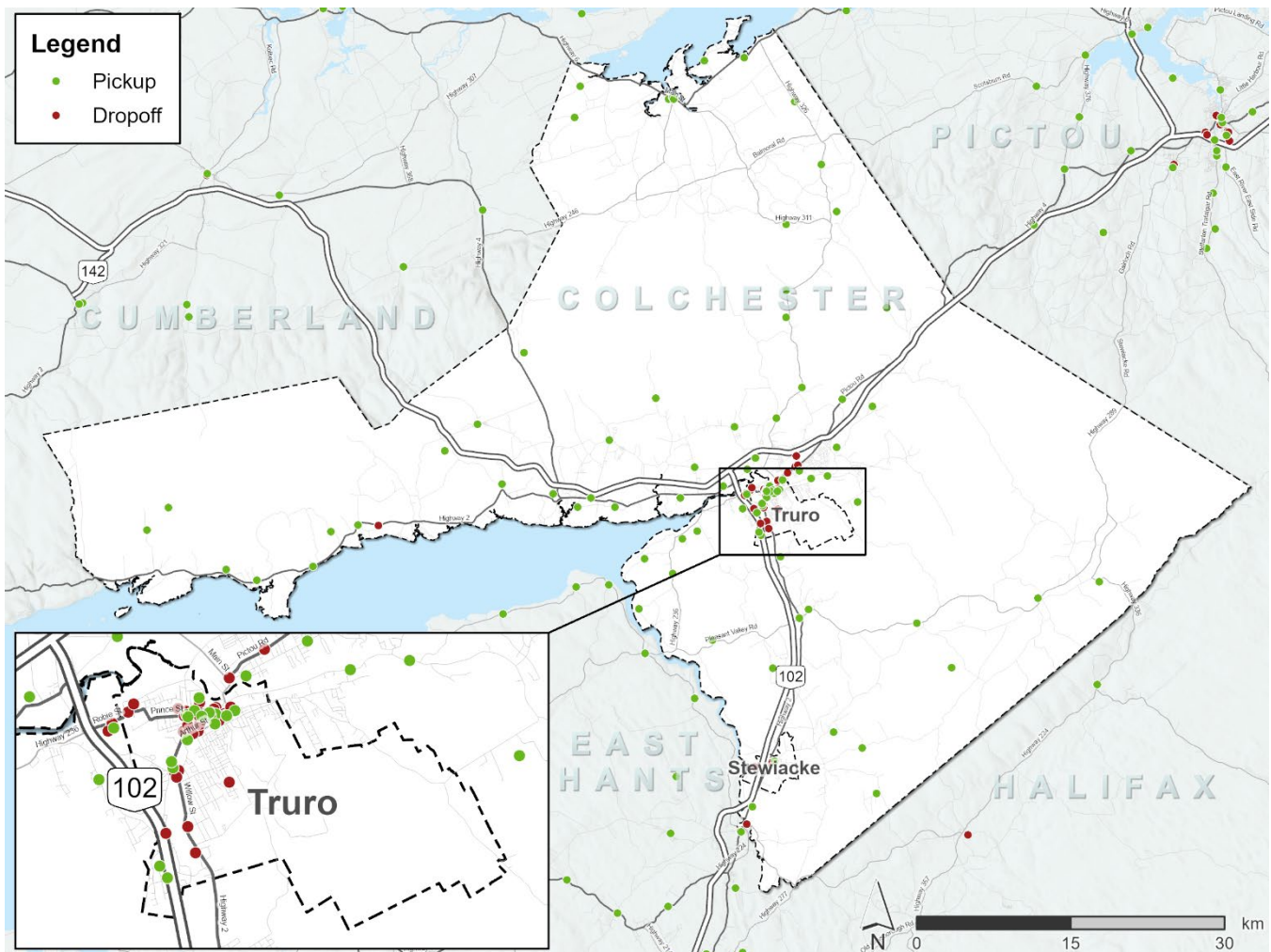


### 3.4 Public Health Transportation Data

The project team has communicated with Nova Scotia Public Health on the topic of the study and how public transit could enable improved outcomes for both healthcare workers and for community residents accessing healthcare. Through Public Health’s Northern Zone Transportation Support program, residents of Colchester receive transportation from their homes to medical appointments and other medical-related trips. Some trips, which are booked by Public Health on behalf of clients, are provided by CTCL. The existing Public Health program is experiencing capacity issues and is having difficulty transporting all clients and accommodating all requests. Through the provision of public transit in the study area, some of these capacity challenges could be alleviated if there are trips that be accommodated using transit service.

To better understand how these medical trips are being taken, Public Health shared pick-up and drop-off travel data with the Arcadis project team. All personal data involved including a user’s personal information and address were redacted from the data to address privacy concerns. A map visualizing pick-ups and drop-offs across Colchester is shown below in Figure 2-8.

Exhibit 3-8: Public Health Pick-Ups and Drop-Offs in Colchester



Across Colchester, resident pick-ups are spread throughout the region. This type of widespread travel pattern of a small number of trips across a very large area is well-suited to the demand-responsive type of service that CTCL provides. Trips within Truro and Central Colchester, by contrast, are much more clustered about the urban settlement areas. Some major drop-off locations like Fundy Trail, The Hub, and the Colchester East Hants Health Centre are unsurprising destinations for users. An extremely high concentration of both pick-ups and drop-offs can be observed in downtown Truro, within a rough semi-triangular shape that is bounded by Willow Street, Queen Street, and Esplanade/Arthur Street. The purpose of these healthcare trips can vary as widely as the number of pick-up and drop-off destinations, with many users employing the service to access family physicians, nurse practitioners, smaller clinics specific to one particular type of service, or services such as legal and income support. Outside of the service area, many clients are transported to the Halifax Regional Municipality, a trip type that is outside the scope of this project but could potentially be addressed in the future by an intercommunity transit service if one is launched by Link Nova Scotia.

## 4 Stakeholder and Public Engagement

Stakeholder and public engagement activities were conducted throughout the spring of 2025. Stakeholder engagement activities consisted of a World Café session in-person for numerous stakeholder groups, followed by interview sessions with individual stakeholders to gain further insight into the groups each stakeholder represented. Public engagement included in-person pop-up sessions and two public surveys, which were available in digital and paper formats. A full engagement summary report is available as a companion to this document, while what follows in this section is a summary of key takeaways that have informed draft transit service design.

### 4.1 Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement consisted of two phases, beginning with a World Café session on March 25. Participants noted the problem of car dependency in Truro and Colchester, as residents are limited by how fast or far they can walk or cycle, while CTCL is at capacity and requires advance notice to book trips. Private transport options such as taxis do exist, but the cost to users is high. Affordability of fares was an important item for panelists, with fares recommended to cost users no more than \$5 per trip, while monthly passes and concession fares for groups like youths, seniors, and low-income residents were recommended to bring down the cost for those who are less able to pay.

Participants identified employment hubs like Truro and Debert, postsecondary schools like Dalhousie AC and NSCC, hospitals, shopping centres, and government services like Service Canada and Access Nova Scotia as key destinations to serve with transit. Participants suggested equity and accessibility should be key areas of focus in designing a transit system. Reliability was also identified by participants as an important point of emphasis, to ensure regular riders can depend on transit when they need it. An ideal transit system was described as a socially acceptable, equitable, and environmentally friendly transit system that integrates with other transportation options, offers convenient services for people in both urban and rural areas, and helps address barriers such as high taxi costs, transportation to medical appointments, and getting employees to work. Participants noted that integrating active transportation with transit would be beneficial to expand its reach, supporting ideas like well-connected trails and bike lanes leading to transit routes and bicycle parking at major hubs.

Interviews were conducted with individual stakeholder groups between the dates of April 22 and June 11. Stakeholders identified major challenges around transportation that impact the overall well-being of many community members, especially low-income residents, newcomers, people with disabilities, rural populations, and students. Existing transportation options are limited, especially in the evenings and on weekends, while taxi fares to essential services like grocery stores can be cost-prohibitive to many. Stakeholders praised the service provided by CTCL but noted that it is currently over capacity and cannot serve the region's travel demand on its own.

Stakeholders view public transit as a type of social infrastructure that should be physically and financially accessible to all. Hours of operation were emphasized, suggesting that service should be available every day of the week. Priority destinations to serve with transit routes included hospitals, shopping centres, employment hubs, schools, recreation centres, and essential services. Stakeholders have a desire to see a transit system that could improve outcomes for employers and workers, reduce social isolation, support education for students, and promote environmental sustainability.

## 4.2 Public Engagement (Spring 2025)

Two public surveys were conducted to engage community members. The first survey was open from April 1-27, asking residents about their travel needs and receiving a total of 1,259 responses. Most respondents had access to a personal vehicle, with the most used transportation types used by respondents including rides from friends or family, walking, and the use of taxis. Transportation challenges identified by respondents included infrastructure concerns, sharing a car between multiple household members, and safety concerns.

The most identified key destinations to serve with transit were medical facilities, shopping centres, grocery stores, workplaces, and recreational facilities. Respondents chose affordable fares, convenient schedules, and convenient routes as the most significant factors that would encourage them to choose public transit. Respondents were geographically concentrated in Truro and Central Colchester, with fewer respondents further from the urban area within the study region. Some respondents lived outside Colchester entirely, but this represented a low number of respondents overall. A strong majority of survey respondents were women, at 70% overall.

The second public survey was open from May 1-22 and received a lower number of responses, at 599. This second survey asked questions related to the specifics of transit service design. Some questions received a more consistent preference from respondents than others. Respondents largely preferred a system of fixed routes with consistent schedules over an on-demand door-to-door system and felt that focusing service on either the most-used corridors or serving areas with the highest degree of need would be the best approach in establishing a transit network. A narrow majority of participants felt that launching with weekend service would be preferable to more daily departures that do not operate every day. Respondents were much more split on the question of whether to focus more frequent service on rush hours or maintain consistent service throughout the day, at a near 50-50 division between the two options. As was the case with the first public survey, respondents were primarily located in Truro and Central Colchester and women made up 70% of respondents.

## 4.3 Community Transit Systems

To support the development of a transit system in Truro and Colchester, the project team interviewed representatives of three other community transit systems around Nova Scotia: Kings Transit in the Annapolis Valley, Pictou County Transit in Pictou County, and Bridgewater Transit in the Town of Bridgewater. Each transit system provided different insights, strengths, and potential lessons for the establishment of public transit in Truro and Colchester. A summary of findings is as follows:

### **Kings Transit**

Kings Transit has been operating much longer than other community transit providers, providing service in the Annapolis Valley since 1981. The service area consists of 170km of highway service throughout the length of the valley floor with service provided for 15 hours per day on weekdays and 13 hours on Saturdays. Unusually for a community transit service, Kings Transit uses full-size standard buses rather than smaller shuttle-type vehicles. Kings Transit observed that they have experienced issues with reliability due to an aging bus fleet with maintenance challenges, a low spare ratio of buses, and a lack of alternate routes through the valley in case of a road being blocked. Bus tracking and communications have been issues in the recent past, and the agency emphasized that it should be easy and straightforward for riders to find information about the service. Since the interview was conducted, Kings Transit has launched a new bus tracking service on their website.

As a long-time service operator, Kings Transit provided numerous lessons for Truro and Colchester to consider when developing and ultimately launching a new service network. Jurisdictional ownership was an important takeaway, with Kings Transit advising in favour of each municipal partner jointly owning the service and advising against any potential fracturing of fleet ownership or administration due to the complications this can cause. It was noted that Kings has focused primarily on intercommunity travel with limited capacity for in-community travel, though this may change in the future pending availability of funding. The transit service cannot necessarily be all things to all people, and Kings Transit suggested focusing on frequency, convenience, and reliability within a service area while aligning service hours to where and when people work. Another point of emphasis was in understanding and clearly communicating that transit service does not and cannot make money, as it is a public service that requires continuous operational funding. Kings Transit also advised in favour of working closely with specialized transit early and coordinating effectively between conventional transit and specialized service providers such as CTCL.

### **Pictou County Transit**

Pictou County Transit has been in operation since 2021, as a service that began as a three-year pilot project and was recently converted to a permanent service. The service is operated by community transportation provider CHAD Transit, which provides a similar door-to-door service in Pictou County as what CTCL provides in Colchester. CHAD Transit recently signed a contract to continue operating the service, which is complementary to CHAD's door-to-door service for medical trips, people with disabilities, and service from outlying communities of Pictou County to major towns like New Glasgow and Stellarton. Ridership has grown faster than initially expected, with more than 50,000 riders on the main route over the calendar year of 2024.

Some of the key lessons and messages Pictou County Transit shared were related to the subject of ongoing maintenance. Vehicles that are continuously operating on the road all day are subject to extensive wear and tear, requiring frequent repairs that carry substantial cost. Fuel costs are also continuous and high for operating consistent daily service, and buses are required to be cleaned each day after being taken out of service, as is the case in many other transit systems or, for that matter, public buildings. Some other buses have been used as substitutes, with CHAD Transit buses occasionally substituting for Pictou County Transit buses on the transit route for maintenance reasons. Feedback in the community since the service's launch has been positive, with some residents beginning to request a complementary loop operating in the opposite direction as the main route in order to reduce travel times.

### **Bridgewater Transit**

Bridgewater Transit is a local community transit service in the Town of Bridgewater that has been in operation since 2017. The service has been well-received in the community since it began operation, and Bridgewater Transit is now in discussions with the Municipal District of Lunenburg to begin operating a second route that would extend beyond the Town's boundaries into nearby communities such as Osprey Ridge. The single route operates with two buses, one of which is in service and one of which is held back as a spare for maintenance purposes. Spare buses are a common and necessary part of transit operations, as vehicle failures and repairs cannot be predicted with perfect accuracy.

Reliability and accessibility were key themes in lessons identified by Bridgewater Transit. Vehicle maintenance is crucially important for the operation of any transit service, and Bridgewater's use of a spare vehicle is very prudent given the frequency and likelihood with which vehicles can experience operational challenges. When Bridgewater Transit first launched, older vehicles were donated from Halifax, but those high-floor vehicles have since been replaced by low-floor shuttle buses which were reported to be easier to board for riders with reduced

mobility. Many regular riders in Bridgewater are lower-income and older residents who benefit greatly from being able to complete shopping errands or attend medical appointments without the use of their own car or the higher cost associated with taxis. United Way in Bridgewater also operates a fare subsidy program where tickets are purchased and distributed to those in need, thus enabling riders who can't afford to pay a full fare to continue using the service.

## 4.4 Public Engagement (Fall 2025)

Additional public outreach efforts were undertaken with support from Colliers and the Municipality of Colchester in November of 2025. These efforts consisted of a public survey and a total of 4 pop-up sessions to drive engagement towards the survey. Pop-up sessions were intended to reach community members in a variety of locations across the service area and were held at Superstore (Elm St.) Walmart (Wade Rd), Dalhousie AC, Kohltech Windows & Entrance Systems in Debert. The questions in this survey were designed to generate useful information for detailed refinement of a transit service network and encompassed the subjects of when and where transit service should operate. The survey, much like the spring surveys, received a very high response rate, generating 904 responses and a vast array of data for the project team to use in service planning. It should be noted that not all responses were complete.

### Frequency vs. Coverage

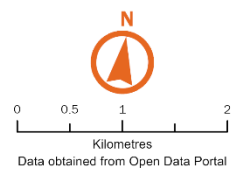
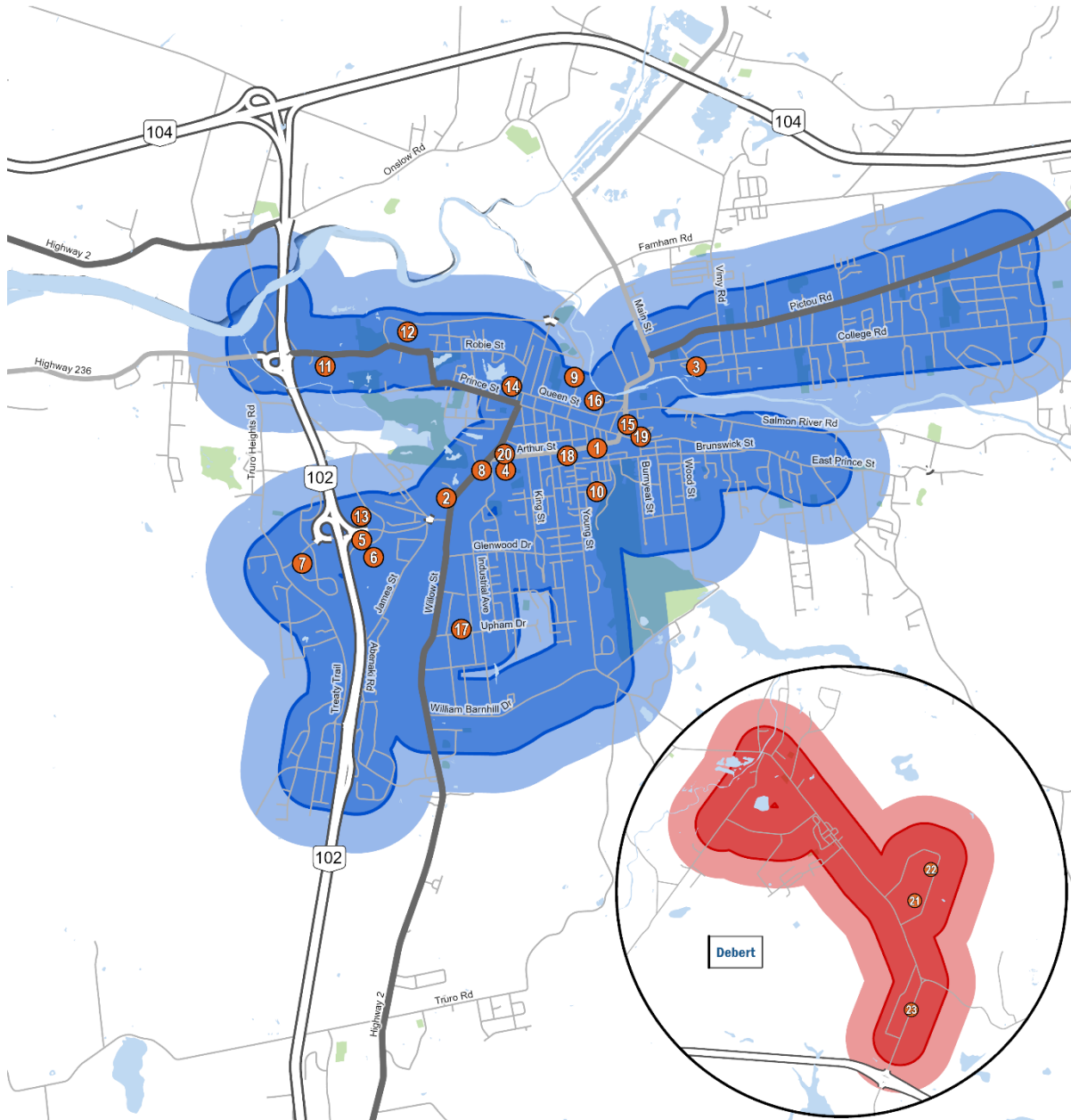
Respondents were asked to indicate their preference between a transit network that covered a larger portion of Colchester but provided less frequent service, and a network that covered a smaller portion of Colchester but provided more frequent service. Frequency of service (or, how often a bus comes) and coverage of service (or, how much of an area has access to transit service) are two important goals in transit planning that represent trade-offs for communities to make, as a limited number of operating hours can be invested in longer routes that cover a wider area or shorter routes that run more often. This trade-off is expanded in Section 5.1: Frequency vs. Coverage.

Two visual exhibits were provided to accompany the survey question of frequency vs. coverage. These exhibits illustrated two different areas of coverage accompanied by some information about potential service headways. The smaller coverage radius (the frequency concept) provided service primarily every 30 minutes, while the wider coverage radius (the coverage concept) provided service every 60-75 minutes. Residents were split on the question, narrowly preferring a frequent service concept by a margin of 55-45%, or 462 responses to 384. In the free-form response, some respondents suggested that a model in between the two could be the best solution for Truro and Colchester.

The graphics that accompanied this question are shown in Exhibit 4-1 and Exhibit 4-2 on the following pages.

Exhibit 4-1: Frequent Service Graphic

Project Folder: T:\Projects\30275749 - Truro-Colchester Regional Public Transit Feasibility Study\ArcGIS Pro  
 Layout: 04\_Truro-Colchester\_SERVICE-PLANNING\_FREQUENT-ACCESSIBILITY  
 Date Exported: 10/24/2025  
 User: duhatsca5634



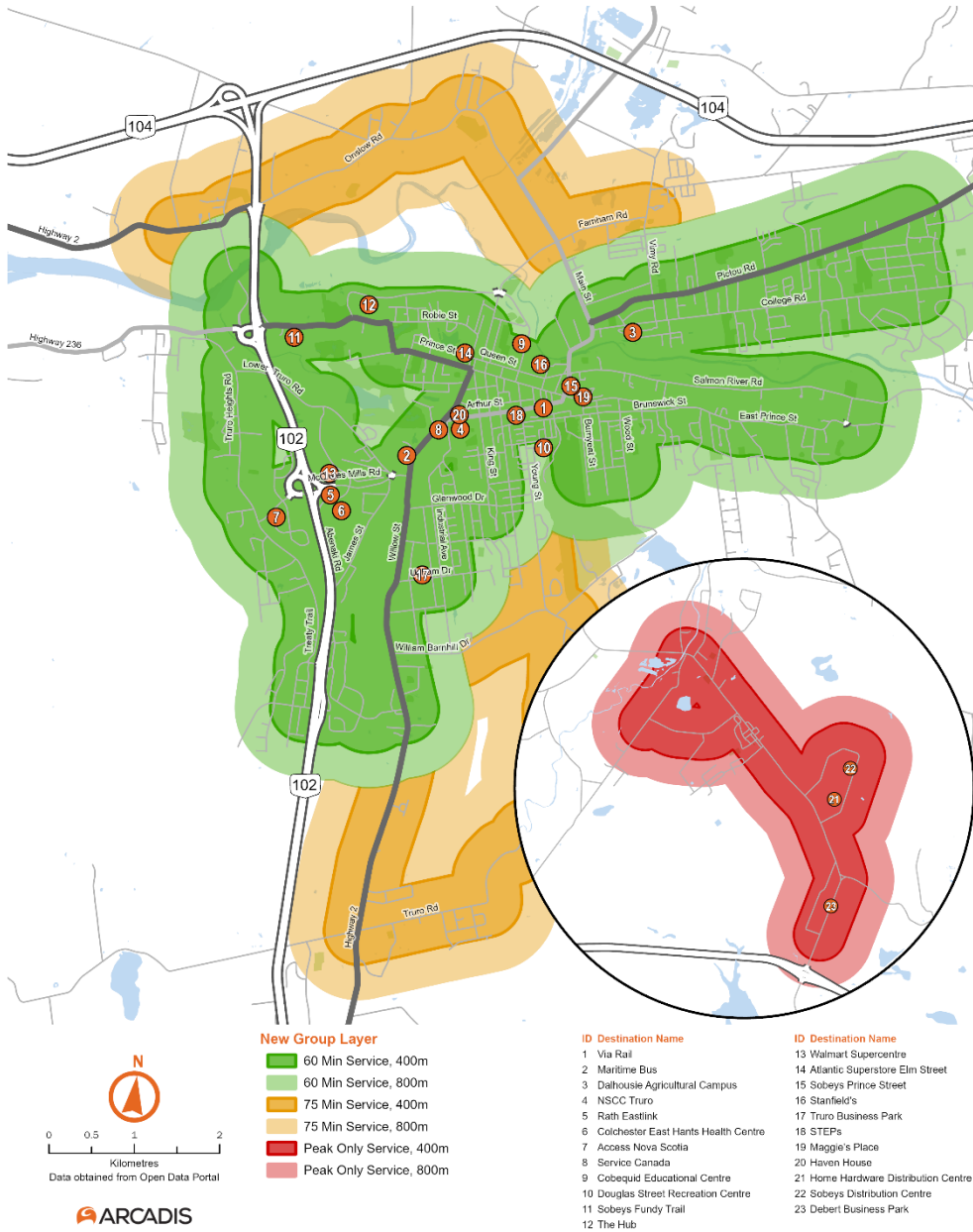
- Service & Coverage**
- 30 Min Service, 400m
  - 30 Min Service, 800m
  - Peak Only Service, 400m
  - Peak Only Service, 800m

**Key Destinations**

- | ID | Destination Name                    | ID | Destination Name                  |
|----|-------------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| 1  | Via Rail                            | 13 | Walmart Supercentre               |
| 2  | Maritime Bus                        | 14 | Atlantic Superstore Elm Street    |
| 3  | Dalhousie Agricultural Campus       | 15 | Sobeys Prince Street              |
| 4  | NSCC Truro                          | 16 | Stanfield's                       |
| 5  | Rath Eastlink                       | 17 | Truro Business Park               |
| 6  | Colchester East Hants Health Centre | 18 | STEPs                             |
| 7  | Access Nova Scotia                  | 19 | Maggie's Place                    |
| 8  | Service Canada                      | 20 | Haven House                       |
| 9  | Cobequid Educational Centre         | 21 | Home Hardware Distribution Centre |
| 10 | Douglas Street Recreation Centre    | 22 | Sobeys Distribution Centre        |
| 11 | Sobeys Fundy Trail                  | 23 | Debert Business Park              |
| 12 | The Hub                             |    |                                   |

Exhibit 4-2: Coverage Service Concept

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 Layout Of Truro-Colchester\_SERVICE\_PLANNING\_COVERAGE-TRURO-ACCESSIBILITY  
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 User: rgs0116



### Service Span

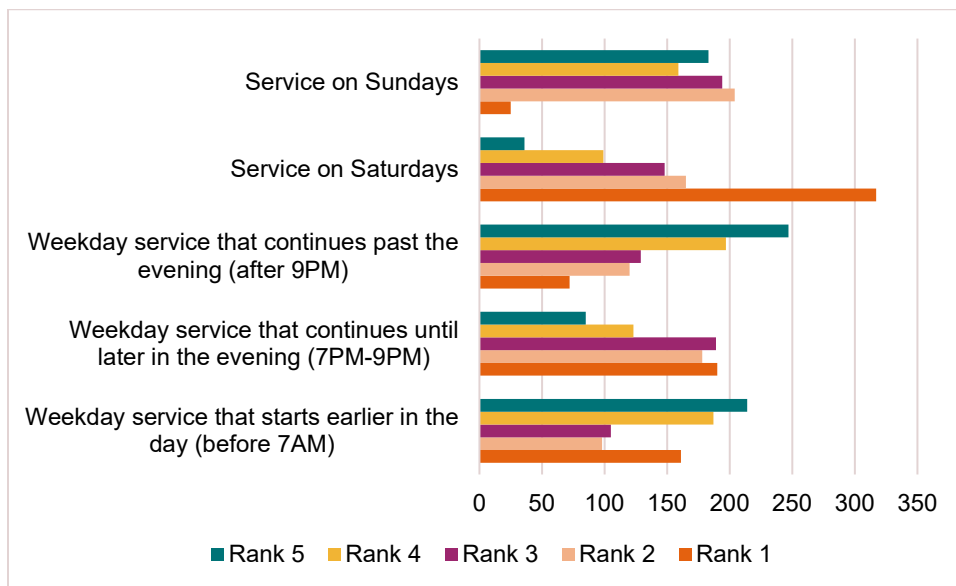
Service span, which refers to the time when transit service is operating, represents another trade-off that transit operators must make in planning their service. Except for a small number of large urban systems, most transit systems in Canada do not operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and even those that do will often provide scaled-back networks during overnight service hours. Transit systems, especially those with smaller budgets operating in smaller communities, must make decisions about when service must run based on the needs of riders in the community and their own ability to fund the service.

To determine priorities for service span investments, respondents were asked to rank different times of the day and the week by importance for transit service to be operating. Outside of weekday “core” hours, which were defined in this exercise as 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., respondents were asked to rank the following five options from most important to least important:

- Weekday service that starts earlier in the day (before 7:00 a.m.)
- Weekday service that continues until later in the evening (7:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.)
- Weekday service that continues past the evening (after 9:00 p.m.)
- Service on Saturdays
- Service on Sundays

This question required respondents to make trade-offs between different time windows. While many transit riders would prefer that service operate as often, as early, and as late as possible, financial constraints inevitably force operators to prioritize the most urgent needs over those deemed to be less critical. Depending on the financial capacity of the municipalities, any number of these time windows could be carried forward for transit service. This data provides some insight into how potential riders might react to the inclusion or exclusion of service at different times.

*Exhibit 4-3: Results of Service Span Survey Data*



Respondents ranked Saturday service as the most important time period outside of weekday core hours, and by a decisive margin. With 317 Rank 1 responses and just 36 Rank 5 responses, participants broadly agreed on the

importance of Saturday service. Evening service was the next-most important, rated as a top three option by over 550 respondents, followed by morning service, which received a similar number of Rank 1 votes but far fewer Rank 2 or 3 votes compared to evening service. This suggests a smaller number of people that feel more strongly about it, as some jobs at industrial employers in Truro and Colchester are known to start as early as 5:00 a.m.

Sunday service and late evening service were the least popular choices. Sunday service had the fewest Rank 1 votes at just 25, but also had more Rank 2 and 3 votes and fewer Rank 4 and 5 votes than late evening service. This suggests that Sunday service, while not an urgent priority for many respondents, may nonetheless be more important than operating service later on weekdays. Service hours on Sundays, if determined to be financially feasible, could be reduced slightly compared to other days to reflect the hours that businesses are open. For many transit agencies that do operate Sunday service, it is typical for service to start later and end earlier.

### **Origins and Destinations**

To provide improved insight into where people in the community want to go, respondents were asked to provide where they would start trips from, or their origin, and up to three destinations they would like to access by transit. This could be provided in as much or as little detail as the respondent was comfortable providing. Some provided complete addresses, while others provided more approximate information like the name of a street, a landmark, or the name of a community. These locations were assigned geographic coordinates and imported into ArcGIS for visualization.

The resulting origin-destination maps, illustrating how demand is distributed throughout the service area are shown on the following pages. Potential rider origins are concentrated most in the urban areas of Truro and Central Colchester with higher density of potential riders being observed in Truro (especially its downtown and east end) and Bible Hill. Three distinct major hubs of destinations can be observed in Downtown Truro, the Colchester/East Hants Health Centre and adjacent Walmart and Rath-Eastlink Community Centre, and along the commercial cluster of Robie Street encompassing The Hub and Fundy Trail Shopping Centre. Secondary hubs of demand can also be seen in Millbrook First Nation, Truro Business Park, and the village core of Bible Hill including Dalhousie AC.

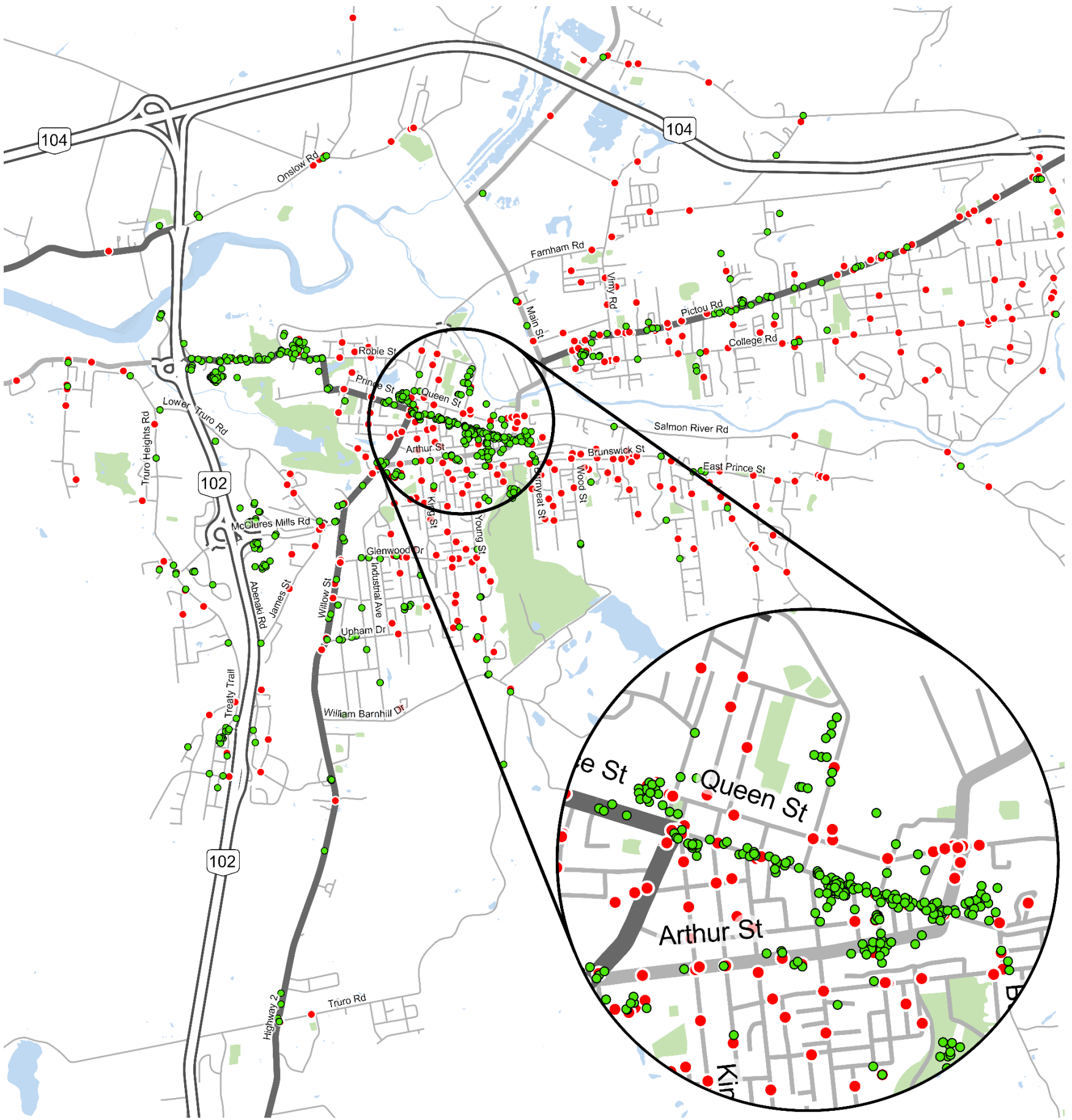
The project team also analyzed this data from a zone-based perspective to see if certain demand patterns were more or less prominent in any portion of the service area. Communities in Central Colchester represented zones (e.g. Bible Hill, Valley, Salmon River) while Truro was divided into eight total zones:

- Robie Malls
- Truro West
- Truro Centre
- Truro East
- Truro South 1
- Truro South 2
- Truro Business Park
- McClures Mills

Two of these zones, “Robie Malls” and “McClures Mills”, were intermunicipal zones that spanned portions of Truro and Colchester. An examination of respondents’ preferences showed that travel demand patterns were largely similar across the service area, with respondents preferring to access the three main destinations of downtown, the hospital/RECC, and Robie by very similar margins. This was instructive in the service planning process, explored in Section 5.

Exhibit 4-4: Origins and Destinations in Truro and Central Colchester

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Layout: 05 - Truro-Colchester\_DemandSurvey-TRURO  
Date Exported: 11/26/2025  
User: ngc5816



- Survey Origin
- Survey Destination

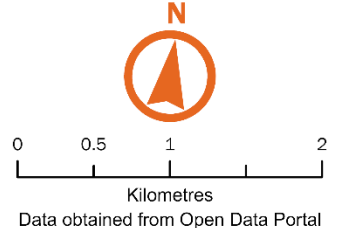
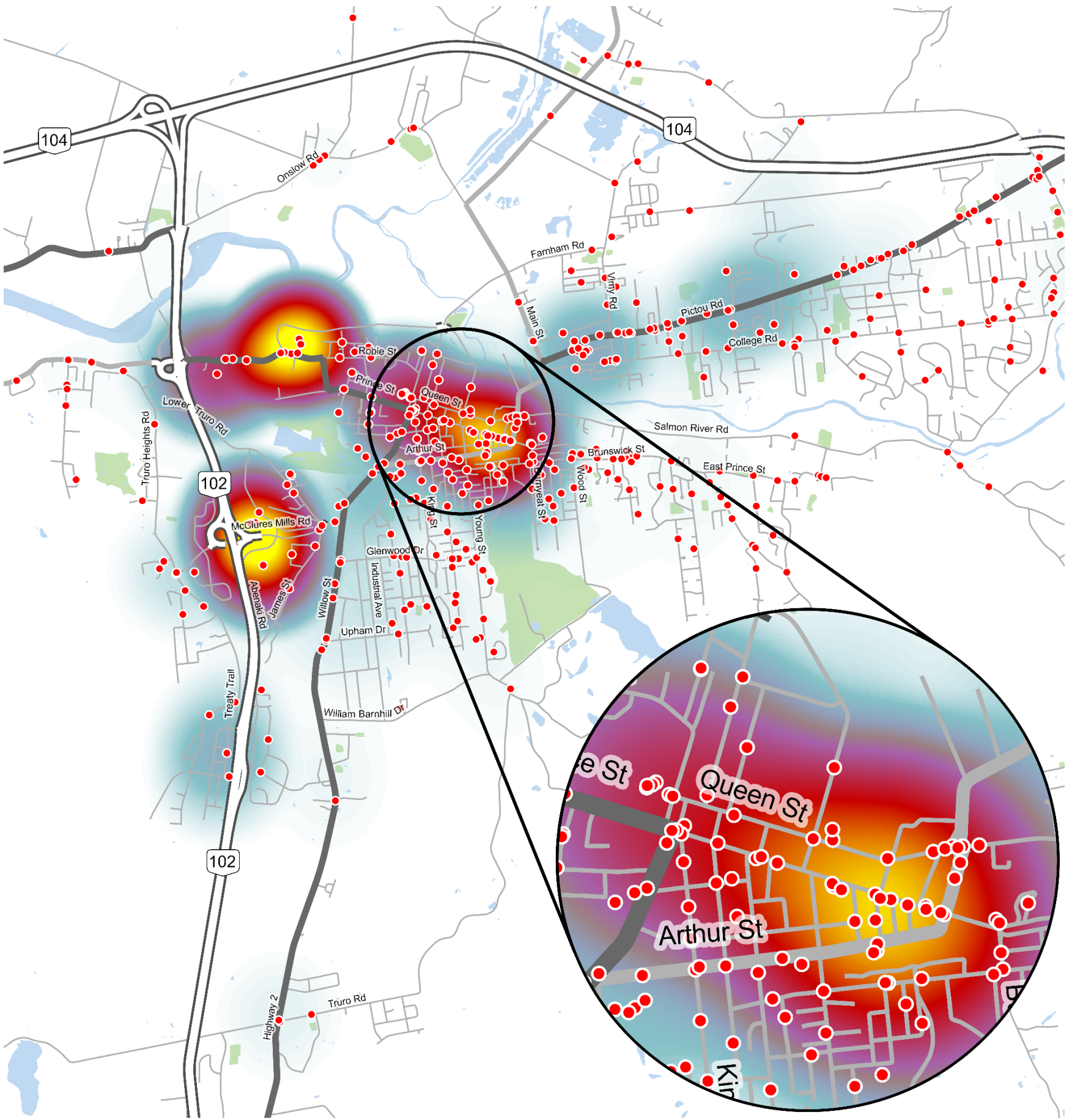


Exhibit 4-5: Origin-Destination Heat Map in Truro and Central Colchester

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 Layout: 05\_Truro-Colchester\_DemandSurvey-TRURO  
 Date Exported: 11/26/2025  
 User: ngc5816



● Survey Origin

**Destinations**

■ Sparse

■ Dense

0 0.5 1 2  
Kilometres

Data obtained from Open Data Portal





## 5 Transit Service Planning

This section details the analysis used to develop a recommended transit service network for Truro and Colchester. The project team developed a vision and service planning principles for what transit should be based on travel data, established policy, and public and stakeholder engagement. The recommended concept was developed from two distinct concepts and ultimately refined following review by staff from Truro and Colchester.

### 5.1 Frequency, Coverage, and Service Span

Service frequency and service coverage are broad themes of transit policy goals and frequent topics of requests from riders. Each of these represent costs and trade-offs, as investments can be directed into service coverage or service frequency, and the only way to achieve a system with both comprehensive coverage and frequent service is to invest more money overall. The same is true when launching a new system. Costs associated with frequency and coverage are operating costs, which must be paid from the municipal operating budget every year and are distinct from one-time capital expenditures.

**Frequency** is a term used to refer to how often a bus arrives at a stop. A related concept is a bus route's **headway**, which refers to the total amount of time between trips, so a bus with a 30-minute headway would arrive at a stop once every 30 minutes. Providing more frequent service requires more buses, and the longer a route is, the more expensive it becomes to provide that frequency of service. For example, a bus with a 60-minute round trip cycle would require one bus to provide a 60-minute headway and two buses to provide a 30-minute headway. If that bus route is extended and now takes 90 minutes to complete a cycle, that same 30-minute headway would require three buses in continuous operation.

**Coverage** is a term that is used to refer to how much of a service area is connected, or "covered" by transit service. A coverage-based route, service, or network is one that extends service coverage to as many people or jobs as possible. Cost is incurred from enhancing service coverage because it requires more buses to run additional routes or to make existing routes longer, especially if an agency wants to maintain the same headway on an extended route. It is in this way that frequency and coverage can be competing goals. Longer routes are more expensive to run than shorter ones, and a higher number of routes will require a higher number of buses unless service is operated less frequently.

**Service span**, as briefly summarized in the second phase of public engagement, refers to the time that transit service is in operation. This encompasses days of the week and hours of the day, as many transit services or systems operate during different hours depending on the day, while some do not operate every day of the week. Service span is another function of costs and rider benefits, as longer hours cost more money but provide a service that is more available to riders, and potentially to a larger rider base. Service span outside of core weekday business hours enables riders to access jobs that operate within earlier or later shifts, as well as other essential aspects of life like shopping, education, healthcare, and recreation or social events. Agencies must make choices about how early or late service should operate, as well as how much of it should operate at different times, based on trade-offs between cost, potential ridership, and community benefit. Some agencies may choose to operate at times when a purely ridership-driven decision might not justify service alone, such as overnight hours. For agencies that operate overnight, the service network is often scaled back compared to daytime hours and may include longer routes, which are easier to operate when traffic is minimal.

Each of frequency, coverage, and service span represent goals, costs, and trade-offs for transit agencies. It is reasonable and understandable for both agencies and riders to want service to cover as many communities as possible, show up as frequently as possible, and always be running when people need it to. The push and pull of these goals must exist within a set budget, which ultimately forces transit agencies to make difficult decisions about their own priorities. Wider service coverage, more frequent service, and longer service spans all come with a cost, and Truro and Colchester will ultimately need to decide how much they are willing and able to invest in transit service to achieve all of these. This report proposes and costs out a conceptual transit network that demonstrates these trade-offs, which is explored further in Section 5.4.

## 5.2 Vision For Public Transit

Based on a review of established policy documents, demographic data review, and the results of public and stakeholder engagement, the project team developed service planning principles reflective of a vision for public transit in Truro and Colchester. These principles guided the development of a conceptual service network, informing the planning process to focus on the community's unique needs, priorities, and travel demand patterns. The principles of this vision included the following:

Transit service in Truro and Colchester should be **connected**. There are many important destinations spread throughout the community, as demonstrated in the trip generator review and peer review. Transit service should connect community residents with as many major destinations as possible, particularly major hubs. As the origin-destination survey indicated, travel demand in Truro and Colchester is concentrated not in one major hub, but in three: Downtown Truro, the hospital and RECC, and the Robie Street commercial corridor. Transit services should thus connect to several of those major hubs to serve where potential riders most want to go. Where transit services intersect, transit hubs will enable a connected transit network by allowing riders to connect between different services. These hubs should be located at major destinations, enabling hubs to serve multiple purposes for users.

A frequent theme that was identified in the policy review and in community and stakeholder engagement was **food security**. Major supermarkets, where groceries are most affordable, are mainly located within or next to Truro. For communities in Colchester, and even for many residents of Truro itself, these major supermarkets are not located within walking distance of residents' homes. This means that purchasing food, one of the most essential needs of humanity, requires the use of a personal vehicle, a ride from a friend or family member, or the use of a taxi. To enable access to groceries without the use of a car, transit services should connect residents to at least one of these major supermarkets. Providing access to even more supermarkets can enable residents to compare prices and shop for sales, further enhancing food availability.

Transit in Truro and Colchester should support **economic development** by connecting residents to jobs and connecting businesses to potential recruits to fill open positions and enable potential expansion. By expanding the number of jobs available to jobseekers without the use of a personal vehicle, public transit can enable better outcomes for members of the community that are looking for work through the expansion of their potential search radius. Some essential employment hubs that can be connected by public transit include the commercial hubs of downtown Truro and Robie Street, major institutions such as Dalhousie AC, NSCC, and the hospital, and industrial hubs like Truro Business Park and Debert Business Park. Employers in Debert, in particular, have shared concerns about staff recruitment due to the Business Park's comparatively remote location relative to the major population centres of Truro and Central Colchester. Staff absenteeism can also be an issue when carpooling rates are high, as the absence of one employee can then lead to the absence of others. The potential

“keystone” role of carpool drivers would thus be lessened if public transit could be used to connect employees to their jobs.

Transit in Truro and Colchester should be **equitable**, providing improved access to jobs and services to lower-income residents and other marginalized groups such as people with disabilities, on and off-reserve Indigenous persons, recipients of housing assistance, African Nova Scotians, single-parent households, new Canadians, and seniors. The development of transit service should be sensitive to the needs of equity-deserving populations in different facets of planning. This could include service coverage, service type, service span, vehicle fleet, stop design, and infrastructure prioritization. There are many ways for this to be done. Stops and waiting infrastructure should be designed to be accessible for all users, as should the vehicle fleet. Service hours could be aligned around industrial, institutional, and retail jobs, most of which operate outside the “nine to five” schedule of office work. Infrastructure installation warrants could also be developed to prioritize stops with a high proportion of equity-deserving riders for the expansion of customer comfort amenities like benches, shelters, and garbage cans. By ensuring transit service is designed around those who need it most, Truro and Colchester can maximize overall societal benefit for their investment.

## 5.3 Transit Service Delivery

The following types of transit service were considered for implementation in Truro and Colchester:

### Conventional Transit

This type of transit service is characterized by a defined route, a defined schedule, and designated stops that are marked with clear signage. Riders can determine in advance where and when the bus will be by consulting the map and schedule of the route. The bus does not deviate away from its route except in cases of road closures, as that would compromise the reliability that is required for riders who depend on it to be in a consistent place at a consistent time. Fixed transit routes are good for connecting major centres and destinations and in built-up urban areas, but are less effective in more dispersed areas where the number of potential customers along the route is lower and the walking distance to stops is higher.

### Flexible Route

A flexible route is similar to a fixed transit route as it normally follows a defined route on a defined schedule, but differs as the bus is able to deviate a certain distance away from the normal route if a customer requests the operator to do so or if the deviation is booked ahead of time. Departure times for flexible routes are provided from a series of set points that the route will always serve, regardless of flexible deviations. A flexible route will allow for wider service coverage than a fully fixed route, but deviations can cause travel impacts for other customers on the bus, and time built into the schedule for deviations can lead to the bus waiting in place for a long period of time if no deviation or extension is requested.

### On-Demand Transit

On-demand transit, also known as demand-responsive transit or microtransit, is a type of transit service that does not operate on a fixed route or a fixed schedule. Rider's request or book trips using an app on a mobile device or by calling a customer service centre. This provides less certainty for riders in terms of route and schedule with the trade-off of flexibility and door-to-door service. On-demand services can be a more cost-effective way to serve a pattern of travel demand that is spread out across a very large area, as the bus will only go out to a pickup or

drop-off location if requested. Service coverage can thus be provided without consistently going out to the same place continuously.

The recommended type of service delivery for Truro and Colchester is a multi-pronged approach led by the implementation of **conventional transit**, supported by the continuation of door-to-door service by CTCL. The public and stakeholder engagement efforts suggested that some sort of conventional transit was strongly preferred by community residents, as most respondents preferred a system of transit routes that were fixed in place with consistent schedules compared to a purely on-demand system. Conventional transit is not necessarily appropriate for all communities throughout Colchester, though. This type of service is appropriate for the urbanized areas of Truro and Central Colchester, but other areas of the Municipality are more dispersed and can't be covered by an extensive routing network due to the high cost and low anticipated ridership.

The door-to-door service currently provided by CTCL should continue to operate as a complementary function to a conventional transit network, providing service to communities that aren't served by conventional transit or to users who aren't able to use it. This would follow the successful example established in Pictou County, where door-to-door service is provided by CHAD (Central Highlands Association of the Disabled) Transit while conventional service is provided by Pictou County Transit. CTCL have advised in discussions conducted as part of this project that they intend to improve their operational efficiency and customer experience by adopting on-demand software. This will enable more effective routing of drivers and make it easier for users to book trips.

Further to CTCL's door-to-door on-demand service, conventional transit could be further augmented through integration with active modes as a "last-mile" solution, enabling more people to access transit routes and stops faster and from a greater distance. Particular focus should be paid to active modes at locations where residents may need to access a stop from further away or where multiple services converge. For example, buses cannot practically travel down long, dead-end streets, but a stop near such a street with bicycle parking available could allow residents to ride to the stop, then get on the bus to complete their trip. Spruce Drive in Salmon River is one such example. Transit hubs with multiple routes converging can also be a useful place to install bicycle parking, as these represent very beneficial locations for transit riders to access many destinations from one place. Truro and Colchester could also purchase fleet vehicles equipped with bike racks, which would enable residents to ride to and from the bus, opening up even more potential destinations for travel by transit.

**Key Recommendation: Conventional transit service in Truro and Central Colchester, supported by continued door-to-door service provided by CTCL.**

## 5.4 Conceptual Transit Network

The conceptual transit service network for Truro and Colchester consists of five transit routes and two transit hubs. This network was developed based on the policy review, demographic data review, stakeholder and community engagement including the origin-destination survey, and a collaborative effort between Truro, Colchester, and the consulting project team. Each of the four urban core routes in the conceptual network seeks to align service coverage with projected demand based on population density and survey results, while ensuring service can continue to operate within the schedule of a 60-minute headway.

Four of the five routes serve communities and destinations within the urban core. This service area consists of Truro, Bible Hill, Valley, Salmon River, Millbrook First Nation, and Truro Heights. The origin-destination survey identified three major destinations, each displaying a similar level of attraction for potential users. All routes in the conceptual network are designed to connect to at least two of these key destinations. To enhance food security

for the community, each route is designed to pass by or come in close proximity to at least two major supermarkets. Two major service hubs are planned. Civic Square in Truro was chosen as the site of a central hub as it includes a large municipally owned parcel, which would enable the construction of an off-street bus terminal in the future without the need to purchase property. All proposed routes converge at this location on the way through downtown Truro, connecting to major travel destinations like Truro Town Hall, Colchester-East Hants Public Library, and the shopping and restaurants available in downtown Truro.

Another hub is proposed near the hospital and RECC, as this area serves as a key destination for riders where three routes converge. Two of the routes are planned to terminate at this hub, which is tentatively proposed to be located at the hospital. However, it could alternately be situated in the RECC parking lot, depending on where permission can be secured for buses to stop.

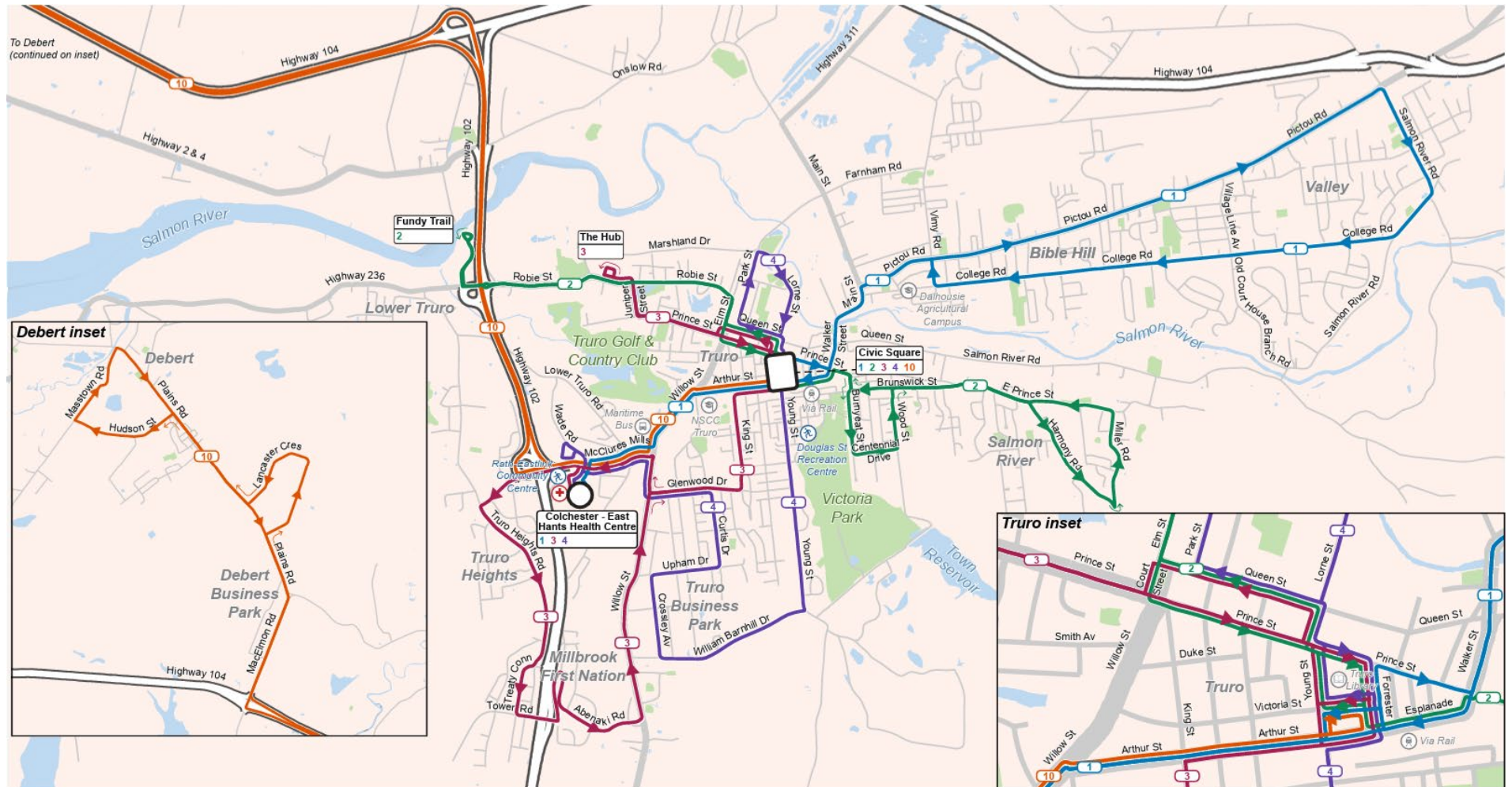
A fifth route is proposed to travel between Civic Square and Debert. This route would operate during weekday mornings and afternoons for the purpose of connecting workers from Truro and Central Colchester to businesses in the Debert area. It would also connect the village of Debert to major destinations in the urban area. This route would run express along Highway 104 between Highway 102 and MacElmon Road. Riders would be able to transfer to this route at either Civic Square or the Hospital, or at any of the stops it serves in the central area.

The routes in the urban core (Routes 1-4) would operate every 60 minutes from 5:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. on weekdays, 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Saturdays, and 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Sundays. The Debert express route would operate on weekdays only from 5:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. and from 1:15 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Scheduled service spans are approximate and would be refined in more detail as schedules are written in advance of service implementation and in coordination with Debert-based employers.

An overview of the conceptual service network and each individual route is provided in Exhibit 5-1 and on the following pages. All routes, names, and numbers are conceptual and subject to change. Editor's note: the Remix output map on the following page will be replaced by a more detailed transit system map in the revised final report.

Final Report

Exhibit 5-1: Conceptual Transit Network



### 5.4.1 Route 1: Bible Hill – Hospital

**Communities Served:** Bible Hill, Valley

**Population in 400m catchment:** 8,200 (1,400 low-income)

**Route description:** This route connects Bible Hill and Valley to the urban core and other major destinations in Truro. From Civic Square and Main Street, the bus travels east on Pictou Road, south on Salmon River Road, and west on College Road to align with the placement of existing sidewalks. It uses Vimy Road and Pictou Road on the way to Truro to avoid a stop-controlled left turn from College Road onto Main Street. It uses Arthur Street, Willow Street, and McClures Mills Road to connect to the hospital, which is its western terminus.

**Notable destinations served:** Dalhousie AC, Sobeys Prince Street, Via Rail, NSCC, Service Canada, Maritime Bus, Walmart Supercentre, Rath-Eastlink Community Centre, Colchester East Hants Health Centre

**Schools served:** Bible Hill Consolidated Elementary School, Valley Elementary School, Redcliff Middle School, Bible Hill Junior High

**Rationale:** This route connects Bible Hill and Valley to two of the three main travel hubs in Civic Square and the hospital, along with major supermarkets, social and community services on Arthur Street, the NSCC campus, and Service Canada. Connections are provided for students from Dalhousie AC and NSCC to Maritime Bus, a key connection that was identified in community engagement. If this route is able to travel faster than expected, the loop could be lengthened to include Farnham Road and the future Five Corners development north of Pictou Road.

### 5.4.2 Route 2: Robie Street – Salmon River

**Communities Served:** Salmon River, Lower Truro

**Population in 400m catchment:** 6,300 (1,400 low-income)

**Route description:** This route connects Salmon River and the east end of Truro to the urban core and other major destinations west of downtown. From Civic Square, the bus travels east across the railway, south on Burnyeat Street, east on Centennial Drive, north on Wood Street, and east on Brunswick Street to connect back onto Prince Street before looping back using eastbound Harmony Road and northbound Miller Road. Returning towards Truro, it travels west on Prince Street and Brunswick Street. It uses Queen Street and Elm Street to connect to the Robie Street corridor, turning back at the Fundy Discovery Site, returning to the central hub using Robie Street, Elm Street, Court Street, and Prince Street.

**Notable destinations served:** Sobeys Fundy Trail, The Hub, Atlantic Superstore, Via Rail, Sobeys Prince Street

**Schools served:** Harmony Heights Elementary School, École acadienne de Truro

**Rationale:** This route is one of two that connects to The Hub shopping centre, also providing service to commercial destinations along the length of Robie Street, one of the three main travel destination hubs identified through community engagement. The neighbourhood “up the hill” in the east end of Truro is served in the outbound direction based on the principle that it would be harder for riders to walk up the hill than down it. Riders heading west who do not want to walk down the hill could ride the bus east to Salmon River and stay on it as it turns back. Service coverage in Salmon River is provided through a counterclockwise loop due to the tight turning radius at the intersection of Harmony Road and Miller Road.

### 5.4.3 Route 3: Millbrook First Nation – The Hub

**Communities Served:** Millbrook First Nation, Truro Heights

**Population in 400m catchment:** 7,300 (1,500 low-income)

**Route description:** This route connects Millbrook First Nation, Truro Heights, and the south end of Truro to the urban core and The Hub shopping centre, providing service coverage along Prince Street west of Willow Street. From The Hub, the route travels along Robie, Juniper, and Prince Streets towards Civic Square. From the central hub at the square, it proceeds along Arthur Street to King Street, up the hill to Glenwood Drive, then travels in a loop through Truro Heights and Millbrook First Nation using McClures Mills Road, Truro Heights Road, Treaty Connector, Tower Road, Abenaki Connector, Abenaki Road, and Willow Street. The route also serves the hospital and Rath-Eastlink Community Centre along this loop, returning to the central square using Glenwood Drive and King Street.

**Notable destinations served:** Millbrook First Nation, Access Nova Scotia, Rath-Eastlink Community Centre, Colchester-East Hants Health Centre, Walmart Supercentre, Truro Business Park, NSCC, Via Rail, Atlantic Superstore, The Hub

**Rationale:** This route is one of two that connects to The Hub shopping centre, connecting it and the residential communities west of downtown to the central urban core and major destinations southwest of it including the hospital, Rath-Eastlink, and Millbrook First Nation. All three major hubs of Robie, downtown, and the hospital are covered. It is one of two routes serving the south end of Truro up the hill, serving King Street. The loop through Millbrook First Nation and Truro Heights is done in a counterclockwise direction to align with existing sidewalks on Truro Heights Road, while a draft version of the route was removed from Abenaki Road to prioritize serving the portion of the First Nation between Highway 102 and Willow Street. Trips entirely within the First Nation could be facilitated by alternating directions of this loop, especially if service is made more frequent in the future.

### 5.4.4 Route 4: South End – Colchester Legion Stadium

**Communities Served:** This route is entirely within Truro

**Population in 400m catchment:** 6,400 (1,300 low-income)

**Route description:** Starting from the Hospital, this route provides service coverage to residential and industrial areas in the south end of Truro. From the Hospital to downtown, the route travels along McClures Mills Road, Glenwood Drive, Curtis Drive, Upham Drive, Crossley Avenue, William Barnhill Drive, and Young Street. Along William Barnhill, future development land is served. From the square, the route provides coverage in a loop along Queen Street, Park Street, and Lorne Street.

**Notable destinations served:** Rath-Eastlink Community Centre, Colchester-East Hants Health Centre, Walmart Supercentre, Truro Business Park, Douglas Street Recreation Centre, Via Rail, Atlantic Superstore, Cobequid Educational Centre

**Schools served:** Truro Elementary School, Truro Middle School

**Rationale:** This route provides a complementary function to Route 3 in its coverage of the south end of the service area, enabling south end residents to travel either north towards downtown or west towards the hospital and Rath-Eastlink. At the hospital, a hammerhead-shaped turnaround is used to provide coverage within the parking lot of Walmart Supercentre. The Walmart Supercentre is not well-connected to the existing sidewalk

network, and would require a pedestrian to either walk along the drive way or over grass to go from the Walmart parking lot to the sidewalk. Desire line paths can be observed along Wade Road, which could be a future network connectivity improvement if paved. Service along Park Street and Lorne Street provides coverage to several higher-density communities where pedestrian connectivity is limited to Robie Street, as well as directly serving the Colchester Legion Stadium and Cobequid Educational Centre.

### 5.4.5 Route 10: Debert

**Communities Served:** Debert

**Population in 400m catchment:** 2,900 (700 low-income)

**Route description:** Starting from Civic Square, this route proceeds along Arthur Street, Willow Street, and McClures Mills Road to get to an expressway as quickly as possible. It then travels express to Debert via Highway 102, Highway 104, and MacElmon Road. The route serves employment destinations in Debert Business Park along MacElmon Road, Plains Road, and Lancaster Crescent, turning back in Debert via Hudson Street and Masstown Road.

**Notable destinations served:** Debert Business Park

**Rationale:** This route connects major employers in Debert to a wider potential pool of workers in the populated areas of Truro and Central Colchester. It aims to improve employment outcomes for residents and enable growth for businesses by encouraging employees to seek out employment in the Debert area, which is a major hub for jobs in Colchester that is anticipated to grow further if existing recruitment challenges can be solved. It connects two major hubs in the hospital and Civic Square to Debert, and residents who do not live along its corridor can connect from their local bus at either of those two locations. It then uses 100-series expressways to reach Debert as quickly as possible. While this route provides some coverage in Truro along Arthur and Willow Streets, it needs to function within the broader service network to connect Debert's jobs to communities around Truro and Central Colchester. This route is estimated to take approximately 65 minutes to travel back and forth between Debert and Civic Square, but would require road testing to determine if it could operate quicker than this and fit within an hourly headway.

The specific schedule of the Debert-based route will need to be aligned with the needs of employers and workers in the region. Prior to developing the schedule and launching the route, it would be advisable to consult with major employers in the Debert area such as Kohltech, Sobeys, and Home Hardware to confirm important aspects of the service design such as shift times, changeovers, workforce distribution, and staff sizing to determine how the route should be scheduled. If a Park & Ride location is determined to be necessary for workers living in rural areas, this should be pursued at a location where land is readily available, and motorists could connect to the transit route with minimal need for the bus to deviate.

### 5.4.6 Rural Shuttle Concept

The rural shuttle concept is a potential way to extend conventional transit service to more communities across Colchester at minimal cost. This concept is separate from the main conventional transit network, though it would allow riders to transfer to routes operating in the urban core. It would require one additional bus that connects Truro and Central Colchester to the communities of Stewiacke, Bass River, and Tatamagouche. The resulting rural network would operate three routes with one bus, alternating service depending on the day of the week, with each of the three communities being served two of six service days. Each community could be served on the

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same day every week, or service days could be alternated, which would provide a greater variety of access options but might confuse potential users.

Recent actions from CTCL's business plan provide similar service to that identified in the rural shuttle concept. As of January 19, 2026, a daily run is provided on a route that picks up clients in Stewiacke, travels to Debert, and then returns to Truro. This intercommunity fixed route service is proposed to be expanded in March of 2026, with the planned launch of a bi-weekly trip from Bass River and Great Village to transport clients to grocery stores and other important shopping destinations. This shopping service is planned to be expanded to Stewiacke and Tatamagouche in the future, which may be complementary to, or evolve into, a service similar to the rural shuttle concept.

The rural concept is shown in Exhibit 5-2 on the following page.

Exhibit 5-2: Rural Shuttle Concept



Rural routes are given double-digit numbers to distinguish from their urban counterparts, as is the case with Route 10 Debert. The rural shuttle concept consists of the following three routes:

- **11 Stewiacke:** Operates from Civic Square to Stewiacke via Arthur Street, Willow Street, and Highway 2. Hilden and Brookfield are also served en route. It is noted that if Link Nova Scotia operates a regularly scheduled route from Halifax Airport to Truro via Stewiacke and Millbrook, as is envisioned in the Regional Transportation Plan, this route may become redundant.
- **12 Bass River:** Operates from Civic Square to Bass River via Queen and Prince Streets, Robie Street, Highway 102, and Glooscap Trail/Highway 2. Masstown and Portapique are also served en route.
- **13 Tatamagouche:** Operates from Civic Square to Tatamagouche via Walker Street, Main Street, and Highway 311. Earltown is also served en route.

The schedule of these rural routes would be published ahead of time and follow a consistent pattern, enabling residents of these communities to plan trips around days when their community's route is operating. Operating hours are conceptually planned as Monday to Saturday (2 days/week each) from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Stops on the rural routes would be limited to locations where a road's posted speed is reduced to 60km/h or less or where the bus is able to stop off highway, to avoid the potential for collisions. Off highway stops on private property, such as the Masstown Market, would require permission from the property owner.

## 5.5 Transit Hubs

The conceptual transit network proposes two major transit hubs where multiple transit routes come together. The locations of these hubs correspond to two of the three most prominent travel destinations identified by community members in the origin-destination survey: downtown Truro and the Colchester-East Hants Health Centre. Transit hubs serve several purposes in a network: they enable buses to stop, turn back, or lay over, they enable riders to connect between different routes, and they should also represent major destinations in their own right. A transit hub located in an important area many riders want to go to will be more useful in a network than a hub that is located purely based on availability of land.

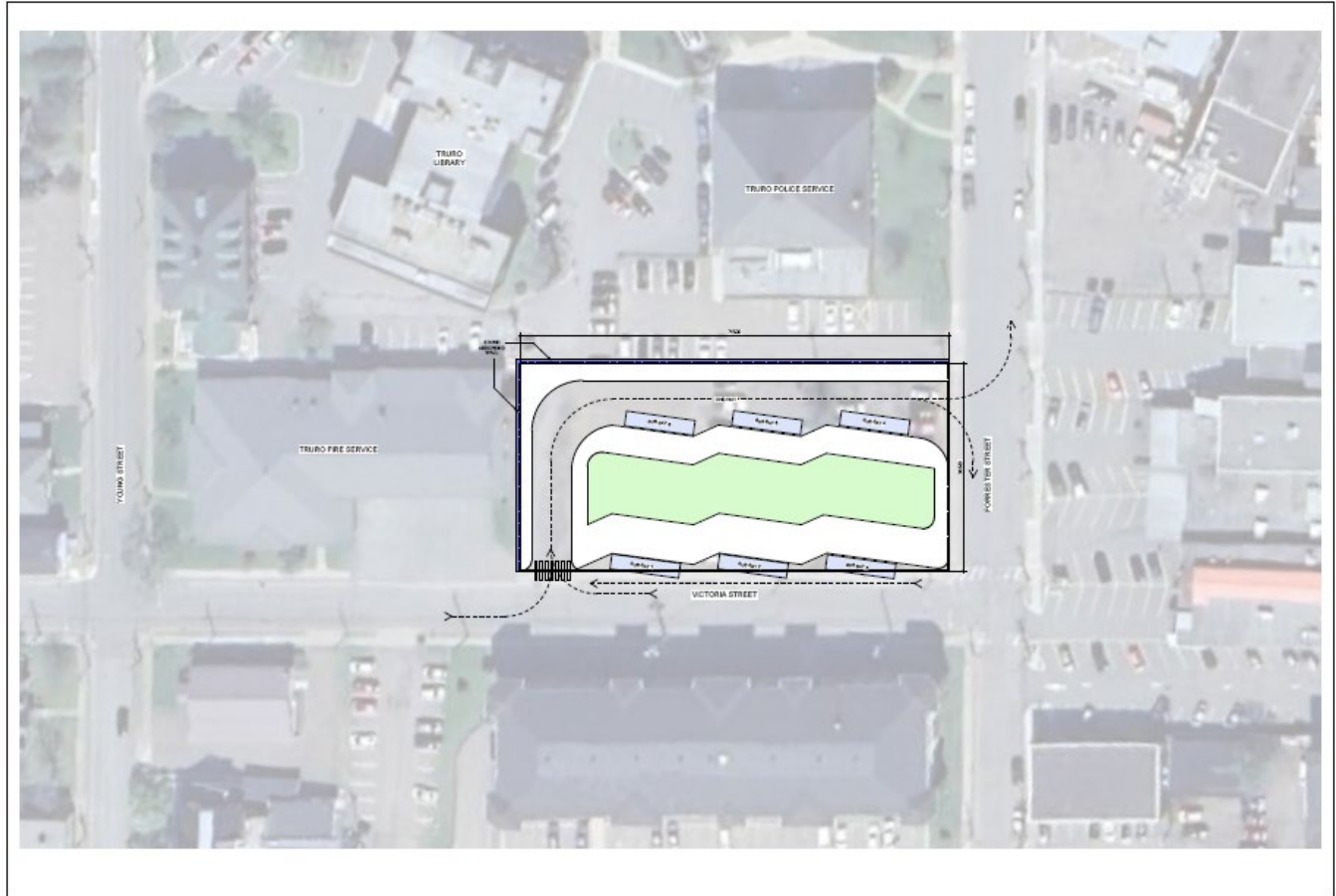
Where possible, routes should converge at hubs at the same time as each other. This principle of **timed transfers** suggests that buses should be scheduled to arrive and wait together at hubs. In transit networks with long headways, this reduces the potential travel penalty of long waits to transfer between buses as long as each route can maintain consistent schedule reliability. In particular, timed transfers should be employed, to the extent possible, to connect communities to any of the three major travel destinations they do not have direct access to. For example, the route serving Bible Hill and Valley in the conceptual network serves downtown Truro and the hospital/RECC area, but does not serve the Robie Street commercial corridor. It should therefore be scheduled to arrive downtown at the same time as one of the two routes proposed to serve Robie Street, enabling residents of Bible Hill and Valley to connect to the shopping opportunities provided there. A related concept is a **pulse**, which refers to all routes serving a hub arriving there at the same time. A pulse is an even more comprehensive version of a timed transfer, as every bus would arrive together and enable transfers between any routes. This requires more forethought in planning than specific timed transfers and would require revisions to the conceptual network in this report, as each route must have exactly symmetrical scheduled run time on either side of the hub where the pulse is meant to take place.

A transit hub may have passenger waiting infrastructure such as benches, shelters, or garbage cans available to improve the user experience. Guidance on the implementation of these items at on-street bus stops is provided in

Section 6. The size and type of infrastructure at a transit hub depends on factors including the size and shape of the site, passenger demand and waiting volumes, and the financial capacity of the municipality to build and maintain this infrastructure. At a high-level maximum, each stopping location at a hub could have its own shelter and seating. Garbage cans and recycling bins are generally located at visible, centralized locations within a transit hub. Cape Breton's Pitt Street Hub, located in downtown Sydney, has four total shelters with seating and garbage cans serving four stop locations that are used by nine total transit routes.

The **Civic Square** transit hub is proposed in downtown Truro on the site of a municipal parking lot at the former location of the Boys & Girls Club. This lot is located on the corner of Victoria and Forrester Streets. It is located in close proximity to many major trip generators including employers, public buildings, restaurants, shops, social services, and the Via Rail station. As there are no existing structures on the property, this hub could be configured in many ways. As a lower-impact intervention, buses could be arranged to stop in the existing curb lanes along the side of the property. There, passenger waiting infrastructure like shelters, benches, or garbage cans could be installed, with the sidewalk expanded further back from the curb into the existing parking lot. Some parking spaces could be maintained as a Park & Ride lot, general public downtown parking, or parking for bus operators changing shifts at the square. In the longer term, this hub could be expanded as an off-street transit terminal, which could conceivably be used by other service providers like Maritime Bus or a Link Nova Scotia-operated regional route to Halifax as described in the Regional Transportation Plan. A conceptual space-proofing design was prepared for this site, which is shown below. It includes six bus bays, three of which are on the north side of Victoria Street and three of which face an internal driveway. This design would be subject to further refinement by a qualified architect prior to being tendered for construction, and could be part of a future phase of implementation if a preliminary transit pilot project is deemed to be successful and additional capital funding becomes available.

Exhibit 5-3: Conceptual Transit Hub Design at Civic Square



Three of the four proposed routes converge at the **Colchester East Hants Health Centre**. In the conceptual network design, buses turn back using the existing perimeter roadway in the hospital’s parking lot. The actual location of bus stops and turnarounds would be subject to confirmation with the Province as the property owner. Typical transit service design at hospitals brings riders, some of which may have reduced mobility as close to the main entrance as possible without interfering with standard emergency response functions, which would be subject to discussions between the municipalities and the health authorities. As a municipally-owned parcel, the parking lot of **Rath-Eastlink Community Centre** is also a possibility for a transit hub. Depending on the availability of scheduled recovery time in the schedules of proposed transit routes, some routes may also make a “hammerhead”-shaped turnaround using the parking lot of **Walmart Supercentre**, subject to permission being granted by the property owner. Walmart is a major supermarket and travel destination, but the design of the property isn’t conducive to pedestrian and transit access. Pathway access to Wade Road from this parking lot may also be desirable to pursue in the future.

The **Robie Street** corridor is proposed to have two bus turnback locations, located at the **Fundy Discovery Site** and **The Hub** shopping centre. This corridor represents an important destination for transit riders but has limited opportunities for buses to turn back using the existing street network as they are proposed to do in Valley and Salmon River. As with other locations, bus turnarounds on private property would be subject to obtaining

permission from the landowner, as would the installation of passenger infrastructure like shelters, benches, or garbage cans.

## 5.6 Integration with Cycling

Active transportation can work hand-in-hand with public transit to provide greater travel options for the community. Each mode of travel has its own strengths, and the two can be combined to great effect to open up more travel options to a wider potential audience. Cycling, in particular, is a very effective “first-mile” or “last-mile” solution where a user’s origin or destination is located just too far away to access a transit route that would otherwise help them complete their trip. The cost of bike parking can vary significantly depending on the desired parking capacity and installation method. For example, for a low volume area, a single bike post with a capacity of two bikes would suffice which can cost approximately \$500, depending on a few different factors like specific model and material. Alternatively, infrastructure with more capacity would increase up to approximately \$1,500 for something with capacity of 6-8 bikes. Another factor to consider is the installation method, with the two main options being surface (bolted to concrete) or in-ground (bolted below the surface and buried). The cost of either is not significantly different for the product but would vary in installation costs and labour. Associated infrastructure, such as bicycle parking, can be placed anywhere in the transit network, but will be most effective where:

- A transit hub or major destination is present, enabling users to connect to many different routes
- A looping transit route pinches together, enabling users to get to and from a location with ease
- A long street or pathway with potential origins or destinations at its end intersects with a transit route
- A transit route reaches the edge of the service area

Based on these criteria and subject to land availability, some suggested locations for bicycle parking around the proposed conceptual transit network include:

### Transit Hubs and Major Destinations

As the two main hubs with the highest number of converging routes, **Civic Square** and **Colchester-East Hants Health Centre** would be great locations for bicycle parking to be provided. Connecting to transit at either of these locations, which act as major destinations themselves, would enable many travel options across the service area. **The Hub** shopping centre in the west end of Truro is another major destination for users that would allow connections to two different routes, while **Atlantic Superstore** is an important destination located at another convergence point of the same two routes. Further south, **King Street at Arthur Street** could capture NSCC-based travel where two different routes converge, and the intersection of **Glenwood Drive at Curtis Drive** could act as a hub for Truro’s south end where two converging routes are available to reach common destinations like RECC and the hospital. **Willow Street at McClures Mills Road** provides a convergence point for three routes that could also intercept traffic coming from further west.

### Pinch Points of Looping Routes

Two longer loops are proposed in Bible Hill/Valley and Millbrook First Nation/Truro Heights. In Bible Hill, Pictou Road and College Road are close enough together that some users would be able to walk to either side of the loop, while in Valley, there would be less discrepancy in travel time from one side of the loop to the other. For riders closer to one of Pictou or College Roads, the area around **Vimy Road and Pictou Road** would provide a good place to connect to transit without the need to ride all the way around the loop in either direction. Similarly for riders in either Millbrook First Nation or Truro Heights, riders wishing to connect to transit by bike could do so at the loop convergence point at **Willow Street and Glenwood Drive**, or at the proposed transit hub at the

hospital. While the proposed loop there is shorter, riders in Salmon River could connect to transit at **East Prince Street and Harmony Road**, removing the need to ride around the Harmony/Miller loop.

### **Longer Streets or Pathways**

Long streets, especially dead-end streets, that intersect with transit routes can benefit from active transportation infrastructure as residents at the very end of the street may want to access transit, but would face a long walk to do so. Salmon River has several such examples including **Evergreen Drive, Spruce Drive, and Blainedale Drive. McLean Street** in the east end of Truro, while not as long, is another good example as it is 700m long from end to end, representing a walk time of approximately nine minutes. **West Prince Street** and **Roosevelt Avenue** in Truro are also examples of longer dead-end streets that could benefit from bicycle parking to connect to transit, while Valley has several examples of longer streets chained together that would have longer walking distances to service on College Road such as **Saywood Drive, Burris Drive, or Hidden Valley Drive.**

### **Edge of Service Area**

Similar to longer dead-end streets, locations at the edge of the transit service area could benefit from bicycle parking as a way to expand the reach of transit to potential riders. Riders wanting to access the transit network from locations further away would be able to ride to the far end of a transit route before boarding the bus to continue to their destination. Some examples of these locations on the proposed routes include **Salmon River Road** in Valley, **Vimy/Pictou Roads** in Bible Hill, **Harmony/Miller Roads** in Salmon River, **William Barnhill Drive** in south Truro, **Tower Road** in Millbrook First Nation, **Truro Heights Connector** in Truro Heights, and the **Fundy Discovery Site** in Lower Truro. The installation of bicycle parking in any of these locations could provide a de facto expansion of the transit service area, enabling riders to access transit stops from further away.

### **Bike Racks on Buses**

Another way to integrate transit with active transportation is to purchase fleet vehicles with bike racks installed, which enables riders to access both their origin and their destination by bike before and after riding the bus. This does not remove the need to provide bike parking at transit stops, but rather provides a complementary function that enables more people to travel by bicycle and by transit. Bike racks are commonly provided on transit fleet vehicles available from a variety of manufacturers and should be considered as the municipalities purchase buses in the future.

## 6 Transit Infrastructure Guidelines

This section provides an overview of the required infrastructure to operate a public transit service. Transit infrastructure consists of physical assets that are related to the passenger experience and the necessary operation of buses. This can include bus stop zones and their associated components, the streets buses operate on, the sidewalks and pathways used by riders to access bus stops, vehicle fleet, and maintenance and fueling facilities. Guidance is provided below for how this infrastructure can be deployed in a transit system.

### 6.1 Bus Stop Zones

Bus stop zones are designated places where buses stop for passengers to get on and off the bus, providing access to the transit system. Each bus stop must consist of, at minimum, a “no standing zone” in the roadway where vehicles are not permitted to park or stop, and signage to indicate the presence of a bus stop. The waiting area for passengers should be well-lit to allow for use at all times of day. Signage must be clearly visible to passengers and bus operators, with clear large text and high-contrast colours. Signage should be double-sided to allow it to be read from either side by approaching pedestrians. Typical bus stop signs will use a light colour as the background, such as white or yellow, with darker text indicating information such as routes serving the stop, the stop’s ID number, and a phone number or website that can provide more information to riders. Signage can be attached to a stand-alone post or mounted on a utility pole if the pole is located at the front of the bus stop. Where parking demand is high and there is the potential for parked vehicles to block approaching buses, “no parking” or “no standing” signs may need to be installed according to the required dimensions of the bus stop zone.

Exhibit 6-1: Examples of bus stop signs from Montreal, Quebec and Dublin, Ireland



To provide accessibility on the transit system, each bus stop zone should also feature a concrete landing pad. Where the public right-of-way is constrained, passengers can board and alight from the bus on the sidewalk, but landing pads should otherwise be constructed where possible. The landing pad provides a hard, paved surface for passengers that is separate from the sidewalk or from grassy areas, which can quickly become muddy if trod on by multiple passengers, especially in rainy or snowy conditions. Grass is also not accessible for mobility devices such as wheelchairs and strollers.

Where a sidewalk is provided, the landing pad should connect the sidewalk to the curb, with the option of additional landing pad space being provided behind the sidewalk to install benches or shelters. Where a sidewalk is not provided, the landing pad should feature a curb cut to enable passengers to accessibly get onto or off it.

The length of a landing pad is dependent on the vehicle that is using it. A pad that is designed for use by a full-size, heavy duty standard bus should be 9.5m in length to enable passenger use from both doors of the bus. A pad that is designed to be used by a smaller vehicle that has only one door can be shorter than this, but should not be shorter than 3m in length to ensure maneuverability for passengers using wheelchairs.

The width of a landing pad is dependent on whether passenger waiting amenities are intended to be installed or not. At minimum, the pad should be wide enough to connect the curb and sidewalk with a continuous concrete surface that is free of gaps. If there is insufficient width to install benches, shelters, or garbage cans without obstructing the sidewalk, additional pad space may be built between the sidewalk and property line to ensure sufficient space for these amenities. For example, many jurisdictions require a boulevard that is 2-3m wide for shelter installation, or alternatively, a 1.5-2m concrete pad beyond the sidewalk if the boulevard is not wide enough. This is contextually dependent upon the width of the shelter being used. Where property lines are up against the sidewalk, a legal easement agreement may be required. Installation of passenger waiting amenities should not block the sidewalk or otherwise interfere with normal pedestrian circulation.

### **6.1.1 Passenger Waiting Amenities**

Passenger waiting amenities are infrastructure components that are designed to improve the experience of passengers waiting for a bus to arrive. The specific amenities included at a stop depend on the stop usage, the availability of space, traffic and operational safety considerations, and the financial constraint of a transit service provider to construct and maintain this infrastructure.

Comfort amenities include shelters, lighting, benches, and waste receptacles such as garbage cans and recycling bins. Shelters increase passenger comfort and safety by shielding them from weather such as rain, wind, or snow, while improving the visibility of bus service. Good lighting at bus stops is also important for passenger safety, comfort, and visibility for the drivers. Benches improve comfort and accessibility as they provide passengers with a place to sit down and rest while waiting for the bus, which can be particularly important for passengers who have difficulty standing for extended periods of time, such as seniors. This can be particularly important for bus routes with long headways. Waste receptacles, including garbage cans and recycling bins, are an important element to improve cleanliness and safety at transit stops. Waste receptacles can reduce litter along key corridors, particularly when stops are located near commercial uses. They require frequent emptying and maintenance to prevent overflows and maintain cleanliness at bus stops where they are installed.

Within the context of a transit system in Truro and Colchester, the first location that should be prioritized for the installation of shelters, lighting, benches, and waste receptacles is the central transfer hub proposed at Civic Square. This location is expected to receive a high volume of passenger transfers and boardings due to its prominent location near many trip generators in downtown Truro and the convergence of proposed bus routes.

Outside of this central hub, provision of benches, shelters, and waste receptacles should be based on observed ridership and community feedback following the launch of transit service. Passenger ridership is typically the primary driver for the warranting of amenity installation, but agencies can also adopt other considerations such as proximity to lower-income communities, a high proportion of senior passengers or passengers with disabilities, proximity to medical clinics, and requests from the community.

Warrants for passenger waiting amenities should be thoughtfully developed based on community need, observed ridership levels, and the financial capacity of the community to construct and maintain infrastructure. Benches are typically the most affordable type of passenger waiting amenity, with construction and installation costs typically ranging from around \$1,000 to \$3,000 per bench depending on its size and design materials. Shelters are substantially more expensive at approximately \$10,000 to \$20,000 per unit and can be vulnerable to destruction by motor vehicle collisions, so their locations should be carefully considered. The cost of installing a waste receptacle is estimated at \$3,000 to \$5,000, depending on its size and materials, though it does require very frequent maintenance by staff, as garbage and recyclables must be emptied regularly from the container.

Bicycle parking infrastructure at bus stops represents a convenient way for transit customers to address the “first-mile/last mile” problem in accessing transit. This is particularly helpful at locations such as Civic Square, where multiple services converge together, or at locations with a wide catchment area of residents that may want to access transit service from beyond the typical walking distance. Proposed turn-back locations for buses, such as Salmon River Road in Valley, Harmony Road and Miller Road in Salmon River, or the Fundy Discovery Site in Lower Truro could be suitable locations for passengers to park bicycles enabling connections to transit from further away. Depending on available space and funds to maintain bike racks, bicycle parking could also be considered at bus stops along or intersecting with corridors that are planned to receive bike lanes or multi-use pathways under Truro’s Active Transportation Plan of 2023.

### **6.1.2 Sidewalks and Connective Infrastructure**

Transit riders need safe walking connections to reach bus stops. For roads where transit service is permitted or expected (collector and arterial roads), sidewalks should generally be provided on both sides in residential areas and where required in industrial/commercial areas. On arterial roads, sidewalks are ideally separated from traffic lanes. Expressways and freeways prohibit pedestrians entirely. Local streets may have limited or optional sidewalks, which can restrict safe access to transit if routes are extended into these areas. Where sidewalks do not exist, especially on transit routes, consideration should be given to constructing sidewalks as capital funding allows. This will inevitably be a long-term objective due to the high cost of pouring concrete.

In addition to sidewalk provisions, bus stops should be sited on the far side of a crosswalk to maximize sight distance between approaching vehicles and pedestrians. Other transit authorities like TransLink follow a principle that the distance between the rear of the bus and the crosswalk should be at least 2m. If a near-side stop is provided, the minimum distance between the intersection crosswalk and the bus stop should be 6m if traffic can pass the stopped bus, as this is required for visibility of crossing pedestrians. For a mid-block crosswalk in front of a bus stop, the minimum distance between the front of the bus and the crosswalk should be 10m.

It is important to consider how passengers connect between the bus stop and their destination. Robie Street, and the shopping centres that are located along it, was identified as one of three major destinations for residents who participated in the survey. However, the connections for pedestrians from the sidewalks running along Robie Street and the front door of the businesses can be poor as these shopping centres were built with the assumption that customers would be driving personal vehicles, since there is no fixed route transit in operations currently. As

an example, Fundy Trail Centre is only connected to the Robie Street through the driveways in and out of the parking lot. If a passenger from a bus got off on Robie Street and wanted to walk to Fundy Trail Centre, they would have to either walk over the grass, which can be impacted by weather to become poor footing, or walk down the driveway in traffic. Therefore, Truro and Colchester should carefully consider stop locations and pedestrian connections to and from them and implement new standards for businesses to accommodate pedestrian traffic connecting to corridors like Robie Street.

### 6.1.3 Bus Stop Placement

Bus stops should generally be spaced approximately 300m apart on standard transit services and placed as close to intersections as possible to maximize access to transit for potential riders. Bus stops must be spaced appropriately to ensure an appropriate balance between operating speed and pedestrian access. Stops should be placed in symmetrical pairs where service operates in both directions, allowing users to travel to and from the same place consistently. Streets with a large pedestrian catchment area and major destinations are good places to install bus stops. In the conceptual transit network, approximately 210 bus stops are estimated. This estimate includes a wide gap in the Debert service where the bus does not stop and assumes just one stop on one-way loop portions of routes, such as Pictou and College Roads in Bible Hill and Valley. This estimate will be refined in the implementation phase of transit service as routes are finalized and schedules are developed.

The position of stops can be defined by the relationship to intersecting streets. The three possible positions for a bus stop include:

- **Nearside:** located immediately before the intersection in the direction of travel.
- **Farside:** located immediately after the intersection in the direction of travel.
- **Midblock:** located anywhere along a roadway between the farside and nearside of an intersection.

Deciding where to place a bus stop at an intersection depends on contextual factors of the intersection's design, the roadway's design, and the path of the transit route serving it. Nearside, farside, and midblock stops provide different advantages and disadvantages depending on this surrounding context. Each stop type can be appropriate in different contexts. Below are some general guidelines for where each type of stop can or should be deployed. Other considerations, like sightlines for other vehicles and crosswalks, should be considered in the placement of a bus stop.

#### Nearside Stops

Nearside bus stops are located just before an intersecting street. Nearside stops provide the closest access for passengers to an intersection, stopping closest to the intersection and crosswalk. At stop-controlled intersections or red lights, nearside stops allow the bus to stop and serve passengers at the same to reduce delay incurred by "double-stopping" at an intersection. Nearside bus stops are also generally safer at roundabouts, as other vehicles are expecting to slow down as they approach the roundabout and a nearside bus stop reduces the walking distance to the crosswalk for transit passengers. Nearside stops are recommended in the following contexts:

- Stop-controlled intersections where the bus is stopping at an intersecting street, including all-way stops
- Signalized intersections where the bus is more likely to encounter a red light than a green light when it reaches the stopping line
- Bus stops at roundabouts

While nearside bus stops can be effective at signalized intersections where the bus expects to encounter a red light, they can increase the amount of delay at congested intersections or free-flowing green lights, as the traffic signal may turn red while the bus is serving passengers, which forces the bus to wait for an additional cycle. Nearside bus stops can also create safety challenges where the intersecting street is stop-controlled, as other traffic may not be able to see crossing pedestrians when passing a stopped bus. Nearside bus stops are also not possible when a bus is turning left at a multi-lane road, as the bus must be approaching the intersection in the left turn lane. Nearside bus stops are not recommended in the following contexts:

- Intersections where the intersecting road is stop-controlled but the street used by the bus is not
- Signalized intersections where the bus is more likely to encounter a green light than a red light when it reaches the stopping line, whether that is because of traffic congestion or a longer green phase
- Multi-lane roads where the bus needs to turn left

### **Farside Stops**

Farside bus stops are located just after an intersecting street. A farside stop provides a receiving lane for a bus crossing an intersection, which allows a bus that encounters a green traffic signal to clear the intersection before stopping, enabling the bus to continue on its way even if the signal turns red after passengers have been served. This receiving lane can also be used by buses turning left at an intersection, allowing the bus to turn left and then stop after it has completed its turn. At crosswalks, passengers that have gotten off the bus are able to cross behind the bus, providing clear sightlines to pedestrians for passing traffic. Farside stops are recommended in the following contexts:

- Intersections where the intersecting road is stop-controlled but the street used by the bus is not
- Signalized intersections where the bus is more likely to encounter a green light than a red light when it reaches the stopping line, whether that is because of traffic congestion or a longer green phase
- Multi-lane roads where the bus needs to turn left

While farside stops can allow for continuous movement when a bus proceeds through a green light, they can be a source of delay if a bus has to stop at an intersection due to a red light or a stop sign, requiring the bus to stop twice. Farside bus stops can create conflicts at roundabouts, as vehicles typically accelerate as they exit out of roundabouts and the distance from the roundabout required for traffic safety at a farside stop would create a much longer walk distance for passengers. Farside stops are not recommended in the following contexts:

- Stop-controlled intersections where the bus is stopping at an intersecting street, including all-way stops
- Signalized intersections where the bus is more likely to encounter a red light than a green light when it reaches the stopping line
- Bus stops at roundabouts

### **Midblock Stops**

Midblock stops are generally not favoured by transit agencies, as bus stops are normally placed at intersections to maximize access for passengers. Midblock stops can be effective in certain situations, usually where a major destination like a shopping centre or a healthcare facility is located away from all intersections, or where the distance between intersections is long enough that some destinations or homes on the street served by the bus would be outside of reasonable walking distance. Midblock stops can also be desirable at locations where a pathway or walkway and crosswalk intersect a bus route without an intersecting street. Young Street at Gero Walkway is an example of this in the south end of Truro. Outside of these extenuating circumstances, midblock bus stops are generally not favoured, and bus stops should be placed at intersections where possible.

## Bus Stops on Rural Highways

In urban areas, it is typical for buses to stop on public streets. Other vehicles on the street can either wait for the bus to pull out from its stop or maneuver around the stopped bus. On rural highways, or other roadways where the posted speed is 70km/h or greater, it is generally not recommended for buses to stop in a live travel lane, with safety concerns becoming more acute the higher the operating speed of traffic. In these high-speed contexts, off-street stops are preferred. This can take the form of an on-street bus bay, also known as a lay-by, which allows a bus to pull out of traffic and into a safe stopping area. Where bus bays can't be built due to financial constraints, limited right-of-way, or conflicting infrastructure along a roadway such as drainage channels or electrical transmission lines, bus stops should be designated at locations that are central to communities and provide a place off-road for a bus to stop. Publicly owned properties such as community centres, fire halls, and schools can be good places for a bus to safely stop off of high-speed rural highways. Privately-owned sites such as markets, gas stations, other commercial businesses, or churches can also be considered for bus stop locations, but permission would need to be obtained from the property owners in order to designate a bus stop.

## 6.2 Streets

Wherever possible, transit service should be operated on streets with sidewalks or pathways. Pedestrian infrastructure is essential to enable passengers to access transit service along the portion of the journey to and from the bus stop, while also providing an important waiting area. Paved areas are more accessible for residents with reduced mobility and are also more stable during times of inclement weather like rain or snow, as unpaved areas can quickly become muddy when walked upon. Where transit service is operated to a street that does not have a sidewalk or pathway on one or both sides, these locations should be prioritized for future sidewalk expansion, provided the transit service is expected to continue indefinitely and is not a temporary routing.

In addition to general sidewalk requirements, not every street is appropriate for transit service. Transit service should operate on through-streets that can be used to travel longer distances through a community where important destinations can be accessed and heavier vehicles are expected to operate. In other jurisdictions that operate transit service, it is common for buses to operate on arterial and collector streets, with the collector design standard representing the minimum standard for transit operations. Except in extenuating circumstances, buses should generally not operate on local streets. Buses can operate on highways and freeways, but will typically not stop along these higher-speed roads. The following provides an overview of general guidelines for a street to be appropriate for transit service, based on guidelines from TAC 2017 Geometric Design Guide for Canadian Roads (TAC Guide), Halifax Municipal Design Guidelines, Saskatoon Design and Development Standards Manual, Barrie Right-of-Way Infrastructure Standards, and TransLink Bus Infrastructure Design Guidelines.

### 6.2.1 Road Classification and Design Speeds

Within the context of a transit system in Truro and Colchester, the most suitable roads for transit operation would be those which can safely operate buses and have adequate width, be able to have safe stops, and are designed for higher traffic:

- **Collectors** and **arterials** are most suitable for transit due to their design for higher traffic connectivity, and opportunity for HOV lanes.

- **Local streets** are avoided for transit unless necessary, as they are not designed for frequent or heavy vehicle traffic. The pavement used on local streets is generally not rated for heavier vehicles and narrow streets with tighter turning radii are not suitable for larger vehicles to regularly use.
- **Public lanes** are unsuitable for transit due to limited width and lack of traffic service function.
- **Freeway and highway** transit operation is permitted for express busses only, as stops are not allowed.

Based on the TAC Guide (see Figure 6-4), the ideal speeds for urban transit roads range from 30 – 60 km/h. On rural highways with posted speeds over 60 km/h, buses should not stop in live traffic lanes. Off-street bus bays or safe pull-off areas are recommended to ensure passenger safety, as high-speed traffic creates significant risks when vehicles decelerate unexpectedly.

## 6.2.2 Roadway Design Standards

This subsection provides an overview of typical roadway and pavement design standards typically required for transit operations. Roads are designed with the standards of relevant national, provincial, and local guidelines identified by road authority. When transit operates on roads, additional considerations must be acknowledged, as there may be impacts on road durability, transit operations, and safety that require design adjustments to accommodate heavier axle loads, frequent stopping, and larger turning radii of transit vehicles.

### Pavement Considerations

Transit routes experience higher axle loads and frequent stopping compared to general traffic. Roads intended for transit service should meet municipal pavement design standards for vehicle heavy loads. To maintain durability, reinforced asphalt or concrete pads are recommended at major bus stops and layover areas.

### Maximum Gradient

Based on TAC Guide and peer jurisdictions recommendations, the maximum grade for most scenarios is 12%, but when buses comprise at least 7% of the traffic stream, the grade should not exceed 10%, with 6% preferred. For extended grades longer than 800m, a maximum of 8% is recommended, while roads with design speeds of 100km/h or greater should not exceed 5%. These limits consider a transit vehicles fuel consumption, braking systems, and winter conditions.

### Lane Widths

A minimum lane width of 3.3 metres is recommended for lanes expected to be used by buses, regardless of the design speed or traffic volume. Typically, other jurisdictions lane widths range from 3.3 metres to 3.7 metres. Where on-street parking is permitted, the recommended lane width ranges from 5.8 metres to 6.0 metres.

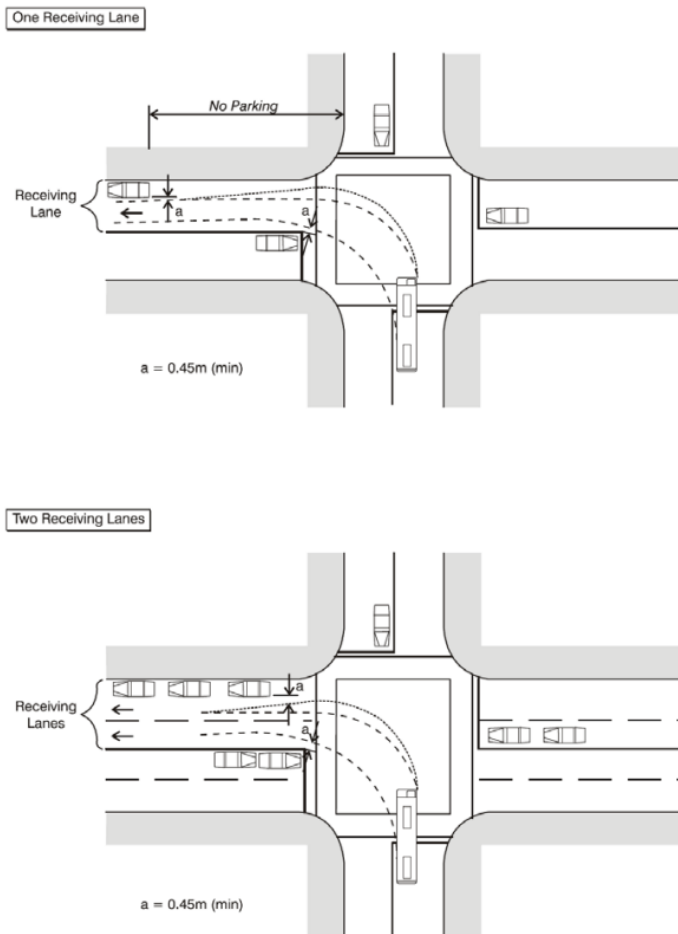
### Corner Radii

Intersection corners must be designed to safely accommodate the movement of transit vehicles. Even if a roadway is sufficiently wide, poor intersection design such as obstructed sightlines can make it difficult for larger transit vehicles to make a safe turn. If possible, corner radii should be reduced to shorten pedestrian crossing distance and lower vehicle turning speeds. When designing new intersections or evaluating existing ones, the following guidelines minimum curb and edge of pavement radius for roads should be considered, as per the Halifax Municipal Design Guidelines:

- **Residential Local at Residential Local:** 5m – 7.5 m
- **Residential Local or Residential Minor Collector at Residential Minor Collector:** 5m – 7.5 m

- **Commercial Local / Commercial Local:** 7m
- **Commercial Minor Collector at Commercial Minor Collector:** 10m
- **Industrial Local or Collector / Industrial Local or Collector:** 5m - 10m (must accommodate truck and bus turning functions well)
- **Major Collector or Arterial / Major Collector or Arterial:** 5m - 10m (must accommodate truck and bus turning functions well)

Exhibit 6-2: Bus Turning Radii



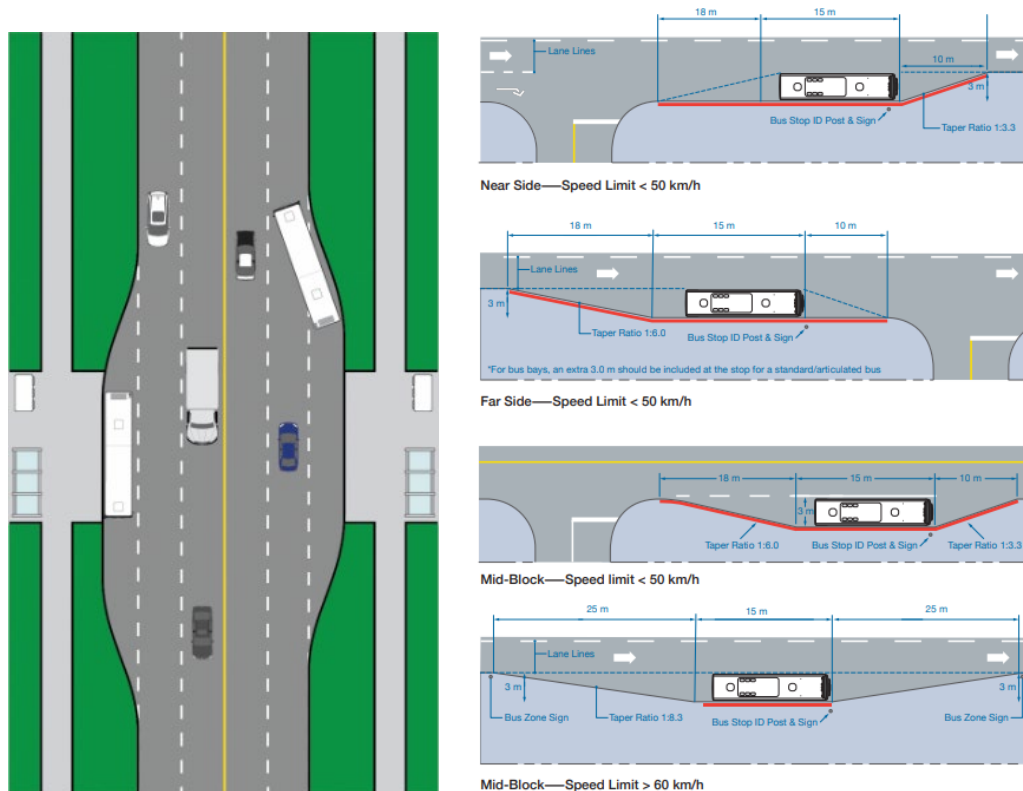
Source: TransLink Bus Infrastructure Design Guidelines

### 6.2.3 Bus Bays

A bus bay is a recessed bus stop which is separated from the main traffic lane, usually on arterial or high-speed roads. The bus pulls out of traffic to drop off or pick up passengers and is typically built adjacent to the curb or as an indented section of the road. Bus bays are not strictly required on any roadway with a posted speed of under 60km/h but will be implemented by municipalities if they are determined to be necessary for traffic-related reasons. Some examples of this include time points where buses are expected to stop for longer than normal, or high-traffic locations where continuous traffic circulation is prioritized. This can lead to service delays if the bus has difficulty merging back into traffic, which can be partially mitigated by yield-to-bus legislation. This mandates

that passing drivers must stop to allow the bus to accelerate back into the travel lane. Because of the potential delays incurred to the bus and the cost associated with cutting back a curb to build a bus bay, these types of bays must be carefully considered and should only be implemented where necessary for speed, sightline, or traffic-related reasons. Typically, on arterial roads, the transit operator will reduce speed to around 30 km/h when entering and exiting a bus bay.

Exhibit 6-3: Illustrations of Bus Bays



Source: Metrolinx (Left) Translink (Right)

### 6.2.4 Traffic Calming Measures

Traffic calming measures are installed to reduce vehicle speeds and to improve road safety for travelers. Traffic calming measures are physical addition to the road, such as curb extensions, traffic circles, and speed humps. Where traffic calming measures are planned along bus routes, they should be carefully designed to accommodate consistent and reliable transit operations. For example, speed humps can have negative impacts on passenger comfort on board buses and cause wear and tear on bus suspension. Speed cushions, which allow buses to drive through without being vertically deflected, are one example of a preferred alternative. Examples of traffic calming measures and their impacts are provided in Exhibit 6-4.

Exhibit 6-4: Impact of Traffic Calming Measures on Transit Operation

Traffic Calming Measure	How it Works	Impact on Transit Operation
<b>Speed Hump</b>	Speed humps are raised sections of pavement that are designed to reduce vehicle speeds.	Buses need to reduce speed significantly to travel over a speedbump, and risk damaging the transit vehicle. Speed cushions are an alternative calming measure to speed humps, having less of an adverse impact on transit operations.
<b>Curb Extension</b>	Curb extensions are a traffic calming measure that widens the sidewalk and physically narrows the roadway in a specific area. They act as traffic calming by encouraging slower vehicle speeds.	Curb extensions can be used to ease transit boarding across on-street parking lanes, however increased corner radii may impact the ability for a bus to make a right turn.
<b>Raised Intersections and Crosswalks</b>	Raised intersections and crosswalks are designed to reduce vehicle speeds by encouraging drivers to yield to pedestrians.	Raised intersections should not be present immediately before or after a bus stop for passenger safety. Ideally, a series of raised intersections/crosswalks should be avoided along a bus route.
<b>Traffic Circles</b>	Traffic circles are islands located at the centre of an intersection, which require vehicles to travel around the island to reach their desired exit.	The size of the traffic circle that provides traffic calming for passenger vehicles may result in difficulty for buses due to their size.

Section 4 of the TAC 2017 Geometric Design Guide for Canadian Roads (TAC Guide) outlines the following characteristics of urban roads:

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Exhibit 6-5: Characteristics of Urban Roads

	Public Lanes	Locals	Collectors	Arterial	Expressways	Freeways
Traffic Service Function	Traffic movement not a consideration.	Traffic movement secondary consideration.	Traffic movement and land access of equal importance	<b>Minor:</b> Traffic movement major <b>Major:</b> Traffic movement primary consideration	Traffic movement primary consideration	Optimum mobility
Traffic Volume (veh/day) Typical	<b>Residential:</b> < 500 <b>Commercial:</b> <1,000	<b>Residential:</b> 1,000 <b>Industrial/Commercial:</b> 1,000	<b>Residential:</b> 1,000 <b>Industrial/Commercial:</b> 1,000 – 12,000	<b>Minor:</b> 5,000 – 20,000 <b>Major:</b> 10,000 – 30,000	>10,000	>20,000
Design Speed (km/h)	30 – 40	30 – 50	50 – 80	<b>Minor:</b> 50 – 60 <b>Major:</b> 60 – 100	80 – 100	80 – 120
Average Running Speeds (km/h) (off-peak)	20 – 30	20 – 40	30 – 70	<b>Minor:</b> 40 – 60 <b>Major:</b> 50 – 90	60 – 90	70 – 110
Vehicle Type	<b>Residential:</b> Passenger and service vehicles <b>Commercial:</b> All types	<b>Residential:</b> Passenger and service vehicles <b>Industrial/Commercial:</b> All types	<b>Residential:</b> Passenger and service vehicles <b>Industrial/Commercial:</b> All types	<b>Minor:</b> All types <b>Major:</b> All types up to 20% trucks	All types up to 20% trucks	All types up to 20% trucks
Transit Service	Not permitted	Generally avoided	Permitted	Express and local buses permitted	Express busses only	Express busses only

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	Public Lanes	Locals	Collectors	Arterial	Expressways	Freeways
Accommodation of Pedestrians	Pedestrians permitted, no special facilities	<b>Residential:</b> Sidewalks normally on one or both sides <b>Industrial/Commercial:</b> Sidewalks provided where required	<b>Residential:</b> Sidewalks provided both sides <b>Industrial/Commercial:</b> Sidewalks provided where required	Sidewalks may be provided, separation for traffic lanes preferred	Pedestrians prohibited	Pedestrians prohibited
Right -of-Way Width (m) (typically)	6 – 10	15 – 22	20 – 24	20 – 45	>45	>60

Source: TAC 2017 Geometric Design Guide for Canadian Roads (Section 2)

## 6.3 Fleet and Maintenance

Transit systems require vehicles to carry passengers, and vehicles must be consistently and continuously maintained to maintain reliable service on the road.

### 6.3.1 Transit Vehicle Types

This subsection explores several different types of transit vehicles and examines their suitability for operating transit service in Truro and Colchester.

#### Passenger Van

Passenger vans are the smallest type of vehicle that is used in transit operations. These types of vehicles are often used by community transportation providers in more rural or remote communities and for on-demand transit where passenger demand is lower. Some specialized (also known as paratransit) service providers will use modified passenger vans equipped with hydraulic lifts to transport passengers who use motorized wheelchairs. Vans have lower overall cost and much lower capacity than larger transit vehicles, with the ability to carry 5-10 passengers depending on the size and configuration of the van. Passenger vans are generally used where transit demand is the lowest and are seldom seen on fixed, scheduled transit routes.

Figure 6-6: A Passenger Van in Jersey City, NJ<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Photo by AndyEdits, licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

### Shuttle Bus

Shuttle buses, also known as cutaway buses, are a common type of transit vehicle for both conventional and specialized transit. Shuttle buses are the most common type of transit vehicle in smaller-community transit systems in Nova Scotia and are used to operate transit routes in Pictou, Antigonish, and Bridgewater. Shuttles can also be used in larger municipalities for routes with tighter turns or lower demand levels as can be seen with TransLink in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia and Calgary Transit in Alberta, while many other urban transit systems use shuttles to run their specialized transit services, as can be seen in Halifax. Shuttle buses generally have 16-20 seats, depending on their configuration, and may be able to fit a small number of standing passengers as well, giving them a capacity of 20 to 25 passengers in total. These buses often sit on a truck chassis and have generally lighter licensing and maintenance requirements compared to heavy vehicles.

Figure 6-7: A Shuttle Bus in Calgary, AB<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> [Photo](#) by St. Clair Witch, licensed under [CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication](#).

### Mid-Sized (Midi) Bus

Mid-sized or midibuses are another type of transit vehicle that is slightly smaller than a full-sized bus. These buses are heavy-duty vehicles that look similar to a full-sized bus with a shorter overall length. The adoption of these vehicles in Canada was significantly influenced by BC Transit, which operates community transit systems in cities and towns across British Columbia outside of Metro Vancouver. These buses have more passenger space than shuttle buses, with a capacity of around 30 to 35 passengers, but are also generally more expensive to purchase and maintain and generally require similar licensing and maintenance components as full-sized buses. Mid-sized buses can be an appropriate use case for transit agencies whose needs exceed what shuttle buses can provide but are not ready to adopt full-sized conventional buses.

Figure 6-8: A Mid-Duty Bus in Orillia, ON<sup>3</sup>



### Standard (Full-Size) Bus

A standard bus is the type of vehicle that often comes to mind when people in urban areas think of public transit. These are large, heavy-duty vehicles with a high passenger capacity that exceeds that of mid-sized buses or

<sup>3</sup> Photo by Padraic Ryan, licensed under [CC BY-SA 2.5 CA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5/ca/)

[www.arcadis.com](http://www.arcadis.com)

shuttle buses. Standard buses generally have 35-40 seats on board, and depending on an agency's crowding standards, may be able to fit a total capacity of 50-60 passengers. Standard buses require generally wider roads and travel lanes compared to smaller vehicles and have more intense licensing and maintenance requirements. Qualified heavy-duty mechanics and appropriate maintenance components are required for the continued upkeep of standard buses. Standard buses comprise the bulk of transit systems in larger cities. In Nova Scotia, they are used by Halifax Transit, Transit Cape Breton, and, unusually for a smaller community system, Kings Transit.

Figure 6-9: A Full-Size Standard Bus in Halifax<sup>4</sup>



### Accessibility

The vast majority of transit vehicles of all types manufactured and sold in Canada are **low-floor** vehicles. These vehicles are lower to the ground than older “high-floor” models and provide level boarding to ensure accessibility for more users. Transit buses are also equipped with wheelchair ramps to enable wheelchair users to board the bus across a continuous surface from the sidewalk to the bus floor. To enable boarding by wheelchair users, bus stops should have sufficient space for the vehicle’s ramp to deploy and for the passenger to maneuver their wheelchair up to the ramp’s surface. Sufficient space should also be provided for wheelchairs at the front of the bus, and a portion of seats should be designated for the exclusive use of passengers with reduced mobility. When

<sup>4</sup> [Photo](#) by KK70088, licensed under [CC BY-SA 2.0](#)

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reviewing the design of potential fleet manufacturers, the municipalities could review ramp design and accessible boarding with advocacy organizations that promote improved accessibility in Colchester.

**Cost Comparison**

The following comparison is based on commercially available information and recent fleet purchase orders published in the municipal budgets of transit agencies across Canada.

*Exhibit 6-10: Approximate Costs and Passenger Capacity of Selected Transit Vehicles*

Vehicle Type	Cost Estimate	Passenger Capacity
<b>Passenger Van</b>	\$100,000-\$150,000	5-10
<b>Shuttle Bus</b>	\$200,000-\$230,000	20-25
<b>Mid-Duty Bus</b>	\$650,000-\$700,000	30-40
<b>Full-Size Bus</b>	\$850,000-\$950,000	50-60

**Fleet Recommendations**

Based on the established record of other community transit systems in Nova Scotia, passenger capacity needs, capital cost estimates, and the constraints of the street network, the recommended fleet choice for transit in Truro and Colchester is a **shuttle bus** for most of the fixed route network, and the potential to consider a **full-size bus** for Route 10 to Debert to accommodate shift changes. This follows the precedent established by successful recent transit service launches in Bridgewater, Antigonish, and Pictou. Ridership projections, which are explored further in Section 8.2.3, expect 8-11 passengers per operating hour, which would be unlikely to overwhelm the capacity of a 25-passenger bus in the near term, particularly as these routes are designed to connect to multiple major destinations and would generally be exchanging passengers consistently, rather than filling up to a maximum capacity before all passengers get off at one key stop. However, service to Debert may be more peaked than the other routes, and a larger bus could help support shift employees. The purchase cost of shuttle buses is such that Truro and Colchester would be able to purchase a fleet in the ramp-up to the launch of the transit network at a cost that would be similar to the system’s ultimate operating cost. More information on these costs is explored in Section 8: Financial Analysis. Shuttle buses are more likely to have an easier time navigating narrower streets in central Truro compared to full-sized buses. CTCL have advised in previous discussions that heavy-duty vehicles would have maintenance and operator licensing requirements beyond the capability of their existing service model, though this could be explored in the future if demand is so high that larger vehicles must be used. As noted in Section 5.6, manufacturers of transit vehicles, including shuttle buses, include front-mounted bike racks as an option for vehicle customization, and the municipalities could purchase shuttles with bike racks to enhance the integration between public transit and active modes.

**Spare Ratio**

Spare ratio refers to the number of vehicles in excess of peak vehicle need that are owned and maintained by a transit agency. As other transit agencies, such as Pictou County Transit, have noted in interviews, transit vehicles face extensive wear and tear by being out on the road all day. This creates significant maintenance need and can cause vehicles to break down unexpectedly. To maintain service reliability in case of vehicle breakdowns, agencies maintain spare fleet so that the entire fleet is never actively in service at the same time. These extra vehicles can be called into service if a breakdown occurs on the road, and can reduce the amount of overall mileage and stress put on each individual bus. It is generally accepted that a minimum spare ratio of 20% should

be maintained by transit agencies, and this must be rounded up to the nearest whole number to ensure the spare ratio does not drop below the recommended threshold. For example, a peak vehicle requirement of five buses, as indicated in the conceptual transit service network, would have a minimum requirement of two spares for a total fleet size of seven buses.

### 6.3.2 Fleet Maintenance Requirements

Ongoing maintenance of the bus fleet is an essential part of operating public transit service. Necessary daily maintenance tasks for buses that enter and exit service include exterior washing, interior cleaning and cash collection, and fueling. This can entail electrical top-ups for buses that run either fully or partially on electric power, or the filling of the fuel tank for buses that run on fossil fuels such as diesel or gasoline. Consistent inspections and preventative maintenance along with regular scheduled component replacements on the engine, transmission, hydraulics, suspension, vehicle body, and tires of the bus are also necessary for buses to continue to function to the best of their usable life. This requires an operations and maintenance facility for any operating functions that are conducted in-house. CTCL have advised in past discussions that implementing a conventional transit network, and indeed expanding the existing service CTCL already provides, requires an expansion beyond their current headquarters. In the short term, a place will need to be found to park and store transit buses, and in the long term, a permanent transit maintenance and storage facility should be built. This facility would need to be designed to accommodate all anticipated transit vehicle types. Other municipalities have explored creative solutions in order to make this happen: Bridgewater, for example, re-purposed an old end-of-life arena building to act as a garage for buses and other municipally owned vehicles.

Each vehicle will have an anticipated usable life from its date of manufacture. While this can be strategically managed by conducting preventative maintenance, parking vehicles inside rather than outside, and operating a suitable spare ratio, any bus will ultimately reach a point where it has exceeded its life cycle and will need to be retired and replaced. As vehicles get older, maintenance becomes costlier, repairs need to be made more often, operating costs increase, and reliability decreases. When procuring vehicles from manufacturers, warranty and anticipated life cycle information is useful data to collect in determining which manufacturers the municipalities should choose to source transit buses from.

Industry sources suggest that the usable life of a standard heavy-duty bus ranges from 12 to 16 years. Lighter-duty vehicles such as passenger vans and shuttles generally do not have as long of a usable life, though they are cheaper to build and maintain than heavy-duty vehicles. Buses beyond this age range should generally be considered for retirement, as they would experience reliability problems and would require consistent maintenance to remain road-worthy. While this would need to be confirmed with the agency, independent sources suggest the oldest buses currently operated by Halifax Transit date back to 2006, far exceeding a usable life of 12-16 years. This, combined with the need to hire heavy-duty mechanics, operator licensing requirements, and necessary insurance revisions to enable CTCL to operate heavy-duty vehicles, is why it is **not recommended** to purchase retired buses from Halifax Transit. To maintain consistently reliable service, the municipalities should procure transit fleet that is new or within its usable life for the new transit system.

### 6.3.3 Zero-Emissions Buses

Zero-Emissions Buses (ZEBs) refer to public transit vehicles that do not produce carbon emissions. The most common types of ZEBs are battery electric buses (BEBs), trolleybuses, and fuel cell electric buses (FCEBs). Compared to standard diesel buses, ZEBs generally have a higher purchase cost and require different operating

infrastructure and maintenance practices, but may ultimately generate long-term savings on fueling costs. A full, system-wide roll-out of BEBs requires substantial capital investment over and above adopting internal combustion or hybrid vehicles due to the significant back-end infrastructure required. Due to the logistical challenge and cost of installing a new network of trolley wires and the difficulty in procuring a sustainable, safe, and consistent source of hydrogen fuel cells, BEBs are the most common type of zero-emissions bus currently being tested in Canada. Vancouver is a notable exception to this, having maintained its network of trolley wires and trolleybuses throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century when many other communities dismantled their networks.

The City of Halifax is currently conducting a Zero-Emissions Bus project to begin modernizing and decarbonizing its fleet. This project is testing and implementing primarily BEBs along with some FCEBs for comparison purposes. It began with significant renovations to the Ragged Lake Transit Centre to accommodate additional bus storage, charging spaces for BEBs, and a solar array on the building's roof to partially offset the substantial increase in the building's electrical load required for charging buses. 60 BEBs were placed into service in the spring of 2025, representing the first significant step that could be seen by transit users on the road. Additional operational infrastructure work is planned for the project's next phase, to take place at the Burnside Transit Centre for the accommodation of BEBs, hydrogen fuel cell buses, and natural gas buses.

The municipalities should observe the progress of the fleet transition program in Halifax and other larger and well-established transit systems that are testing ZEBs, looking to these other communities for valuable precedents, lessons learned, and overall industry progress. Implementing ZEBs as part of a new transit system would represent a substantial challenge for CTCL, Truro, and Colchester as this would require extensive training, provincial inspections, and a large up-front infrastructure investment before buses could begin service. Depending on the results observed by other communities in their ZEB roll-outs, their successes could be emulated in Truro and Colchester in the future, once a sustainable and effective transit system has been established.

As an interim step ahead of implementing a ZEB program in Truro and Colchester, the municipalities could build on the positive experience CTCL has had in operating **hybrid vehicles** to minimize fuel costs. These vehicles can be operated at a lower cost and with a lower carbon footprint than purely internal combustion vehicles without the need to produce as much back-end infrastructure up front as a zero-emissions vehicle would require. The operation of hybrid or conventional internal-combustion vehicles can still generate emissions reduction benefits by combining passenger trips that would otherwise be taken by individual vehicles into one vehicle.

Some key requirements to consider if the municipalities launch a ZEB program in the future include:

- **Garage bus charging:** the transit garage will need to be designed in a manner that facilitates electric bus chargers, which have much more significant electrical power requirements compared to a standard bus garage or other industrial use. Vehicle charging should take place indoors. Chargers can be installed in a transit facility with a phased approach, and funding from senior levels of government may be available to undertake a future retrofit to accommodate them.
- **Scheduling and blocking:** the current generation of BEBs generally cannot sustain charge throughout an entire service day. Thus, implementing BEBs requires that the bus fleet be changed out during the service day so that buses can be returned to the garage before their charge runs out. This is similar to older conventional transit operating practices dating back to when buses had to be brought back into a garage for fueling prior to present-day fuel efficiency improvements. This may require a higher spare ratio to ensure consistent service throughout the day.
- **On-route charging:** While most charging of ZEBs takes place within a garage facility, some charging functions may be able to be accommodated while on route. These in-service “top-ups” can allow buses to

remain in service for longer periods of time compared to a purely in-garage charging approach. To avoid incurring excessive delay for transit riders, in-service charging should generally be done at the end of a route, and to take advantage of electrical infrastructure, several routes would ideally come together where chargers are installed. This may also have scheduling implications if a bus needs to lay over at the end of its route for longer than it otherwise would. Within the conceptual service network, Colchester-East Hants Health Centre may be a suitable location for on-route charging in the future, as it is located at a convergence point where several routes end. Civic Square and Fundy Trail Discovery Centre may also be appropriate for consideration.

- **Software systems:** Introducing ZEBs will require specialized software systems to monitor the fleet. This includes four main system types. First, vehicle monitoring systems are used to track vehicle data including energy consumption, battery levels, and vehicle propulsion efficiency. Second, charging and energy management systems are used to schedule and manage charge sessions between vehicles. Third, digital yard management systems are used to inform staff of which buses are ready or not ready for service. Finally, scheduling software is used to ensure zero emission vehicles are fully charged by the time they are due to enter active service (this can often be paired with charging and energy management and digital yard management systems). Communities that have implemented ZEBs successfully may have input on these software requirements and how to manage them.
- **Staff training:** The introduction of ZEBs will require a comprehensive staff and training plan. This should include updated safe workplace policies and standards, personal protective equipment, and training curriculum and materials for different work streams. If this maintenance work is conducted in-house by municipal or CTCL employees, there may be opportunities to develop an apprenticeship program specific to the maintenance of electric vehicles.

**Key Recommendations: Conventional transit service in Truro and Colchester should be provided by shuttle bus-sized vehicles and a standard sized bus for the Debert route. Retired transit buses are not recommended for purchase due to potential reliability issues. Zero-emissions buses should be considered in the future when transit service has been established in the community, though hybrid buses may be a reasonable vehicle for service launch.**

## 7 Operating Model and Governance

### 7.1 Operating Models

In investigating operating models that could be utilized by Truro and Colchester, the project team interviewed transit providers from other communities around Nova Scotia. The operating models from these communities include non-profit, municipally owned, inter-municipally owned, and private contractors. This section discusses the different operating models available to Truro and Colchester, and recommends the operating model viewed as the most feasible and beneficial.

#### 7.1.1 Non-profit Transit Provider

Pictou County has had a public transit service in operation for almost five years. Pictou County Transit, which is a municipal service operated by a non-profit organization, is funded by the towns of New Glasgow and Stellarton, the two communities central to its service area. Pictou County Transit is operated by the Central Highlands Association of the Disabled (CHAD) Transit, which started as an advocacy group in 1981. CHAD started providing transit services to the community in 1996 in response to public transit bus services in the county being discontinued. The benefits of integrating an existing transit provider like CHAD Transit include institutional knowledge of transit needs of the community, service expertise, and community trust.

Truro and Colchester are currently serviced by a transportation provider operating as a non-profit organization. The Colchester Transportation Cooperative Limited (CTCL) provides door-to-door service across both Truro and the entirety of Colchester and is a member of the Rural Transportation Association of Nova Scotia. Like CHAD Transit, CTCL is affiliated with the Nova Scotia Community Transportation Network (NSCTN). CTCL has intimate knowledge of the transportation needs of the community, as well as their trust. The project team met with members of the CTCL to discuss future growth of public transit services in Truro and Colchester and found them to be interested about servicing as the service provider for a fixed route public transportation system in the community.

#### 7.1.2 Municipal Department

A common operating model across the country for transit service providers is to be municipally owned and operated. This type of operating model is used by most urban transit systems across Canada, including major cities like Halifax (Halifax Transit, formerly Metro Transit) or Montreal (STM). Bridgewater, Nova Scotia, started their municipally owned and operated transit service in September of 2017. The project team interviewed officials from Bridgewater Transit to get a better sense of the process they undertook in starting a municipal transit service. While there are benefits to having transit services conducted by the municipality, there are a lot of up-front capital costs and significant administrative work to get the transit service operations. Similarly, because Truro and Colchester are looking for a transit service connecting the two, a scenario where only one of the two municipalities owns the transit services could cause friction.

#### 7.1.3 Inter-Municipally Owned

Since the study area for this Regional Public Transit Feasibility Study includes more than one municipality, the project team interviewed members of Kings Transit Authority, which operates transit services connecting Grand

Pre in the east and Weymouth in the west. It is owned by seven municipalities, which include Kings County, Annapolis County, the District of Digby, and the Towns of Berwick, Kentville, Wolfville, and Middleton. Kings Transit Authority is Governed by the Mayors and Wardens of the seven municipal owners. Each of the seven municipalities provide funding for the transit service provider, however, it is not divided equally. The benefit of having all municipalities' that are serviced by the transit provider as owners and having representation on the Board is that there is better synergy for the operations of the transit provider. A similar governance model could work for Truro and Colchester.

#### **7.1.4 Private Contractor**

Private contractors can be hired to provide the transit services for a community. The benefits of hiring a third-party contractor can include less administrative duties compared to other options and lower capital costs as the company would come with vehicles and drivers. Similarly, the municipality would not own or be required to maintain any fleet vehicle assets, which can be costly to maintain. The County of Pictou, during their investigation into public transit for the County, investigated hiring such a company. However, they were unable to find a private contractor able and willing to provide the service and opted to maintain their existing partnership with CHAD Transit for the foreseeable future.

#### **7.1.5 Recommended Operating Model**

Based on the review of transit operating models for similar municipalities in Nova Scotia, the project team believes the best approach for Truro and Colchester is through a partnership with the non-profit Colchester Transportation Cooperative Limited (CTCL). As discussed above, starting a new municipally owned and operated transit service provider requires significant up-front investment and administrative work. Similarly, the geography of Truro and Colchester requires that both municipalities are involved and collaborate. Finally, while a private contractor can be used to avoid some of the challenges of starting a new municipally owned and operated provider, there can be long-term challenges, and the nearby municipality of Pictou County had trouble finding suitable partners.

Leveraging CTCL's established service experience and community trust is a great opportunity for Truro and Colchester to implement a public transit service quickly and efficiently. By partnering with a proven local provider, the municipalities can benefit from CTCL's deep understanding of the community's unique transportation needs, and its demonstrated track record in service delivery. The recommended fixed route transit service is also designed to be implemented in collaboration with CTCL's existing door-to-door service. By partnering with CTCL for the fixed route service, there will be better synergy between the two services, providing residents of Truro and Colchester with an integrated transit system.

This recommended operating model is not without risks. CTCL has indicated a willingness and enthusiasm to operate conventional public transit in Truro and Colchester, but this is qualified with the understanding that the organization is at capacity, both in terms of the demand on its vehicle fleet and the available space at its current headquarters. Implementing public transit in Truro and Colchester, regardless of the operator, will require the purchase of transit vehicles and a place to store them. In the short term, this will require a temporary parking location for transit vehicles. In the medium to long term, this will require an expanded permanent home for CTCL that could be used to store all vehicles, including conventional transit buses and CTCL's door-to-door service. This permanent facility is costed as part of the financial analysis in Section 8.

The recommended governance structure for this operating model is explored further in Section 7.3.

## 7.2 Legal Requirements

There are several key legal and administrative considerations involved in implementing a transit service in Nova Scotia. As the transit system moves from planning into later phases of development, these considerations are important so that the service meets all provincial obligations and regulatory standards.

### 7.2.1 Municipal Authority and By-law Requirements

Constitutionally, public transit is a municipal responsibility, meaning that the municipality has the authority to own and operate a municipal transit service if it chooses to do so. To implement a public transit service, a suitable By-law and council approval would be required. The municipality may perform operations with respect to:

- Defining, planning, managing and controlling the service including determining the level of service (hours, frequency of service);
- Setting of fares and financially investing in the service;
- Acquiring or installing the necessary infrastructure (vehicles, stops, shelters, property, buildings); and
- Entering into agreements or contracts for the operation of the service as necessary.

### 7.2.2 Passenger Carriers in Nova Scotia

In Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia Regulatory and Appeals Board (NSRSB) is responsible for the regulation of all public passenger carriers within the province, acting under the Motor Carrier Act, Motor Vehicle Transport Act, and Traffic Safety Act. All public passenger carriers are required to obtain a license from the NSRSB to operate legally. This licensing requirement ensures compliance with provincial safety and regulatory standards governing public passenger vehicles. The Board's mandate includes:

- Licensing of public passenger carriers;
- Approval of fares, routes, stops, and equipment;
- Hearing and adjudicating complaints against carriers; and
- Reviewing and deciding applications for route modifications or service discontinuance.

NSRSB has two categories of public passenger carriers: Motor Carriers and Commercial Vehicles.

#### Motor Carrier License Requirements

In Nova Scotia, a Motor Carrier License is required for individuals or businesses operating commercial vehicles with a seating capacity of nine or more passengers, excluding the driver.

Applications for new Motor Carrier licenses or amendments to existing licenses must be filed with the Nova Scotia Regulatory and Appeals Board (NSRSB). When an application involves the introduction of a new public passenger service, it must be advertised in the Royal Gazette. Motor Carrier license holders must maintain adequate insurance coverage, with minimum requirements based on vehicle capacity:

- For vehicles with 20 passengers and under: \$2,000,000 Third Party Liability (inclusive limits) and \$2,000,000 passenger liability and property damage (inclusive limits)
- For vehicles with 21 passengers or over: \$2,000,000 third party liability (inclusive limits) and \$3,000,000 passenger liability and property damage (inclusive limits)

### Commercial Vehicle License Requirements

A Commercial Vehicle License is required for passenger vehicles designed to transport eight or fewer passengers, excluding the driver. These vehicles may provide daily, weekly, or other regular services, as well as charter or tour services that enter or depart any municipality.

All carriers providing services as commercial vehicle operators must apply for and maintain a valid Commercial Vehicle License issued by the Nova Scotia Regulatory and Appeals Board (NSRSB). Operators of commercial vehicles must maintain the following minimum insurance coverage:

- For vehicles with 20 passengers and under: \$2,000,000 Third Party Liability (inclusive limits) and \$2,000,000 passenger liability and property damage (inclusive limits).

### 7.2.3 Driver Qualifications

Transit operators in Nova Scotia must ensure that all drivers have the appropriate Class of licence for the vehicles they operate. Licensing is administered by the Registry of Motor Vehicles and includes specific class requirements and upgrade procedures, to maintain the necessary standards of safety and competency of licence holders.

The following table outlines the driver’s license class required for each vehicle type.

*Exhibit 7-1: Vehicle Licensing Requirements*

Vehicle Type	Driver’s License Required
<b>Seating capacity more than 24 passengers</b>	Class 1 or 2
<b>Seating capacity between 10 and 24 passengers</b>	Class 1, 2, 4
<b>Seating capacity of 8 passengers, excluding the driver</b>	Class 1, 2, 4 & Class 4 Restricted with Condition 16
<b>Any single vehicle not exceeding 14,000 kg</b>	Driver’s Licence required Class 1, 2, 4 & Class 4 with Restricted 16, Class 5

To obtain or upgrade to a Commercial Class 1–4 licence, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- 19 years of age for Classes 1–3;
- 18 years of age for Class 4;
- Hold a full Class 5 licence for a minimum of one year;
- Successfully complete both written and road examinations; and
- Provide a valid medical examination report from a licensed provider.

### 7.2.4 Accessibility Considerations

The provision of public transportation in Nova Scotia is guided by provincial legislation that outlines the obligations of public transportation services.

### Accessibility Act, 2017

The Accessibility Act establishes the framework for achieving a fully accessible Nova Scotia by 2030. The purpose of the Act is to prevent and remove barriers to access and usage of community services, which includes public transit. When planning a transit system, all new services must be designed and operated with barrier-free access.

## 7.3 Transit Governance Plan

Good governance is essential to the effective operation of public transportation in any community. This subsection presents examples of governance models from around Canada and proposes a structure for the future public transit service in Truro and Colchester.

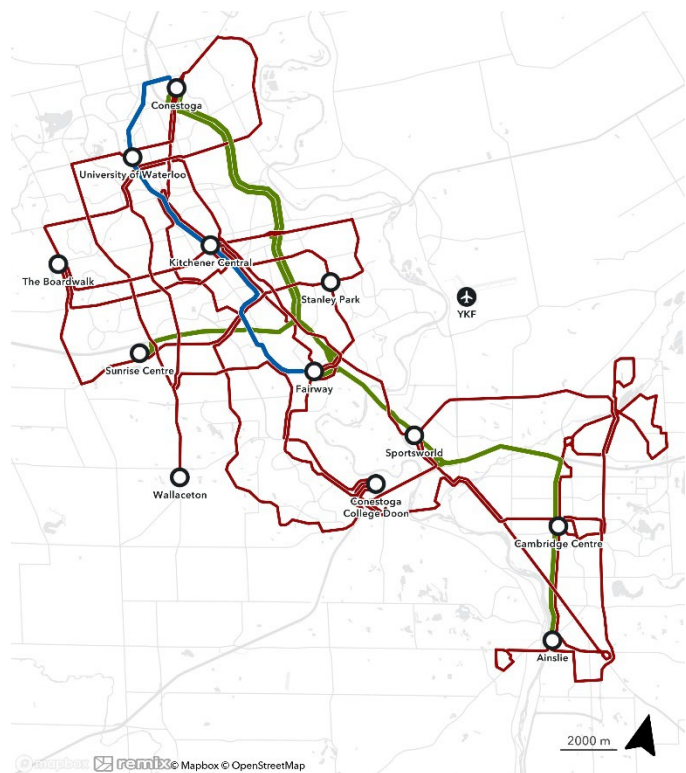
### 7.3.1 Transit Governance Models

There are many ways to govern a transit organization that operates across municipal boundaries. Depending on the structure of local government and the urban context of the transit service region, different models may be appropriate. Several examples from different areas of Canada include the following:

#### Regional Government: Grand River Transit, Ontario

In Ontario, regional municipalities function as an upper-tier government in an area comprised of multiple lower-tier municipalities. Waterloo Region is an example, including the cities of Kitchener, Waterloo, and Cambridge, and the townships of Wilmot, Woolwich, Wellesley, and North Dumfries. Transit in Waterloo Region has been a regional responsibility since 2000, when the former City government agencies of Kitchener Transit and Cambridge Transit were amalgamated to form Grand River Transit, or GRT. Most transit service operates in the Region's three cities. Service to the communities of Elmira and St. Jacobs, north of Waterloo, has operated for many years, while service has more recently been extended to communities such as New Hamburg and Breslau, the latter of which is home to the Region's airport. GRT's most recent master plan includes even more rural or regional transit routes that are planned to launch in the coming five years. Other regionally run agencies in Ontario include York Region Transit, Durham Region Transit, and Niagara Region Transit, which operate under a similar regional government framework.

Exhibit 7-2: A network view of Grand River Transit's 2025 Business Plan



Through GRT, transit is one of many responsibilities assumed by the government of the Regional Municipality of Waterloo. Transit services are funded through the Region's budget, which is passed annually by Regional

Council. This council includes representatives from all its member municipalities, including the Regional Chair, four regional councillors from Kitchener, two regional councillors from Waterloo and Cambridge, and the individual mayors of each of the seven municipalities: Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge, Wilmot, Woolwich, Wellesley, and North Dumfries. The Region has many other responsibilities including public health, community services, community housing, waste management, and the maintenance of regional roads. Many, but not all, of the main roads used by GRT's transit service are regionally maintained.

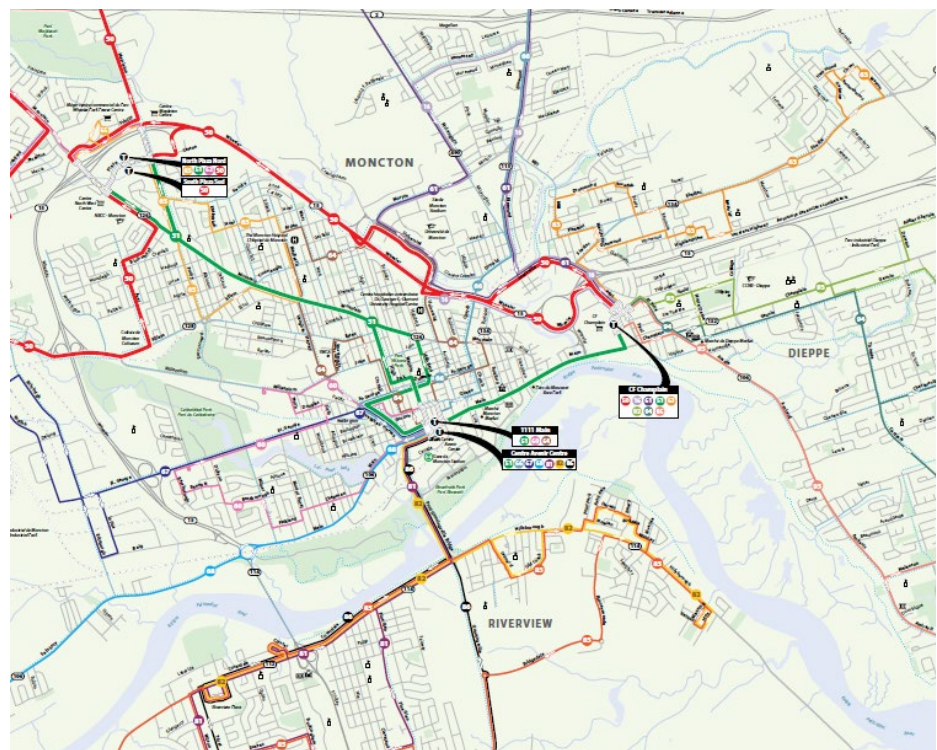
Crucially to this example, Ontario's regional governments are inclusive of the cities and townships within them, as opposed to county municipalities in Nova Scotia that exclude incorporated communities. Some responsibilities in a regional government are left to the individual cities and townships, which have their own governments, budgets, and councils.

### **Municipal Department: Codiac Transpo, New Brunswick**

Codiac Transpo is the transit service provider for the tri-community area of Moncton, Dieppe, and Riverview, New Brunswick. The service operates as a municipal department of Moncton but is funded by and serves all three municipalities of the tri-community. With a 2021 population of just under 80,000, Moncton comprises approximately two-thirds of the tri-community's population and serves as its primary centre. Routes in Dieppe and Riverview are generally structured to bring riders into Moncton to connect with major destinations like CF Champlain Mall, Downtown Moncton, or Université de Moncton. As the region's primary urban centre, Moncton is also home to much of the tri-community's employment and its major hospitals.

Codiac Transpo is governed by the tri-community Public Transit Governance Committee. This is a cross-regional committee with five members: three from Moncton, one from Dieppe, and one from Riverview. Committee members are municipal councillors who are appointed by their mayors to serve on the committee. The Public Transit Governance Committee usually meets four times per year. Committee staff include municipal staff from all three municipalities: Moncton's Deputy Treasurer and General Manager of Sustainable Growth and Development, Dieppe's Director of Urban Mobility, Riverview's Director of Engineering and Public Works, plus three Codiac Transpo staff: the Director, the Manager of Operations, and the Supervisor of Finance and Administration. This structure maintains a cohesive system across all three communities, though it is weighted strongly towards Moncton as the biggest centre, the service operator, and the

*Exhibit 7-3: An overview of Codiac Transpo's service network.*



location and funder of most service hours.

Dieppe and Riverview own the buses on routes that serve their municipalities, though Codiac Transpo is paid to maintain and operate them. This maintains some independence between municipalities within the system, with each community free to set its own service levels but has some limitations in regional integration as individual obligations and responsibilities (and buses) must be structurally separated.

### Intermunicipal Ownership: Kings Transit, Nova Scotia

Kings Transit Authority is the transit provider in the Annapolis Valley, generally connecting communities across many municipalities along Trunk Highway 1. Kings Transit's service area encompasses many local governments, consisting of three counties: Kings, Annapolis, and Digby, as well as several incorporated municipalities within those including Berwick, Wolfville, Kentville, Middleton, Annapolis Royal, and (the Town of) Digby. The service is headquartered in the village of New Minas.

Service contracts existed between county municipalities and the towns within their borders. The service partners of Annapolis and Digby Counties owned their own buses and infrastructure, while buses were maintained by Kings Transit for a fee that was charged to the partner municipalities. Routes begin and end in Greenwood, near the county line between Kings and Annapolis Counties, which made this distinction easier for administrative purposes but requires riders to transfer buses to continue on. Route lengths are also restricted by reliability, as the longer a transit route is, the more difficult it is to maintain a consistent schedule.

In mid-2025, a new ownership agreement was established for Kings Transit, which is now owned by each of Kings County, Annapolis County, the District of Digby, and the Towns of Berwick, Middleton, Kentville, and Wolfville. The Board of Directors of Kings Transit consists of the mayors of its municipal owners, with the agency's budget being collected from municipal taxes of all municipal owners. To better reflect its service area beyond the County of Kings, Kings Transit is in the process of changing its name to Tidal Transit.

Exhibit 7-4: Kings Transit's service network in the Valley



Kings, or soon to be Tidal Transit, serves a unique area that is very different from urban centres like Moncton or Kitchener-Waterloo-Cambridge. Rather than a single or dominant urban centre, or even several dominant urban centres, the system serves a long, linear valley encompassing a high number of different towns and villages across three different counties. This unique structure means many government services are delivered by organizations that cover several municipalities, like Valley Waste. These examples reinforce the importance of cooperation, as the different communities across the valley are able to combine their strength to deliver public service that would be challenging for any smaller community to put together on its own.

### Nonprofit Operating Partnership: Pictou County Transit, Nova Scotia

Pictou County has recently established a transit system with funding assistance from the provincial and federal governments. Pictou County Transit (PCT) started as a three-year pilot project that was made into a permanent service. PCT has been operated by CHAD (Central Hastings Association for the Disabled) Transit, the nonprofit community transportation provider in Pictou County since its inception. PCT had previously considered contracting its service operation out to a third party but found a lack of suitable contractors and opted instead to

maintain the operating agreement with CHAD Transit. CHAD operates separate vehicle fleets for PCT and for the CHAD community transportation service.

PCT was initiated by the Mayor of Stellarton and is owned by the Towns of New Glasgow and Stellarton. It is structured in a way that would make it possible to add new municipal owners in the future. The central core service area of PCT also includes the towns of Trenton and Westville. PCT's second route, which was launched in 2024 as the "Expansion Route" and simplified in 2025 to a more user-friendly design that's easier for riders to understand, also extends service to Pictou Landing First Nation and the Town of Pictou. It is now known as Route 2, with 2A and 2B branches.

PCT's operating context, though it does have some differences with Truro and Colchester, provides an overview of how transit can work in the similar context of Town-County relationships in Nova Scotia. Like Truro and Colchester, the Towns of New Glasgow and Stellarton (along with Trenton and Westville) are legislatively independent from the County that surrounds them. At a population of just over 19,000, PCT's central service area of New Glasgow, Stellarton, Trenton, and Westville has a similar, if slightly lower population than Truro and Central Colchester. PCT operates a transit system across several communities connecting across a wide service area, including service to a First Nation. Rather than establishing a new municipal department from scratch, PCT has partnered with an existing nonprofit organization with extensive experience operating transportation service in the community. This parallel is explored further in the next subsection.

The following table outlines some key points to different governance and operating models, and how they might apply to the context of Truro and Colchester.

Exhibit 7-5: Pictou County Transit routes

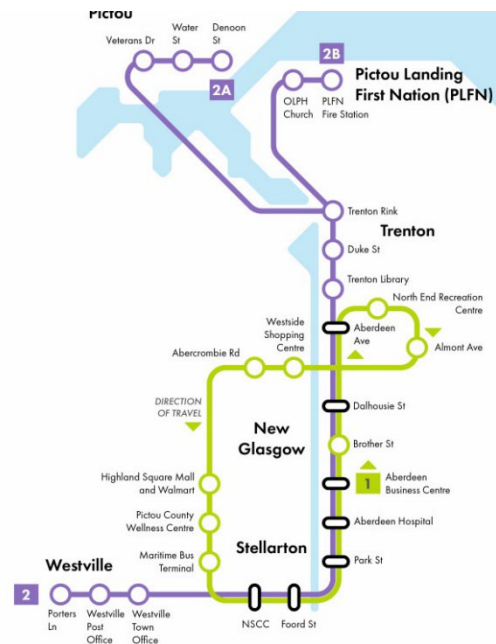


Exhibit 7-6: Key Highlights of Governance Models

Component	Regional Government	Municipal Department	Intermunicipal Ownership	Nonprofit Partnership
<b>Example</b>	Grand River Transit	Halifax Transit, Codiac Transpo	Kings Transit	Pictou County Transit
<b>Operator</b>	Regional transit agency	Municipal government	Cross-municipal transit organization	Nonprofit partner organization
<b>Oversight</b>	Regional government or Council	Municipal government or Council	Board of Directors and Councils of funding municipalities	Board of Directors and Councils of funding municipalities
<b>Vehicle Ownership and Maintenance</b>	Regional agency	Municipal government	Cross-municipal transit organization	Nonprofit partner organization
<b>Operational Staffing</b>	Regional transit staff	Municipal transit staff	Transit organization staff	Nonprofit partner organization
<b>Infrastructure Maintenance</b>	Regional government	Municipal government	Funding municipalities	Funding municipalities
<b>Funding</b>	Regional budget	Municipal budget	Proportionally weighted from municipal budgets of funding municipalities	Municipal budget(s)
<b>Challenges</b>	Requires an all-inclusive regional government, which is not present in Truro and Colchester	Requires substantial startup efforts and involvement, requires one municipality to take the lead	Requires substantial startup efforts and involvement, requires complex agreement to balance community needs	Local government has oversight over system but not control, limited to what nonprofit partner is able to do
<b>Opportunities</b>	Senior level of government includes all communities and can mediate disputes	Enables greater municipal control of day-to-day operations	Enables greater municipal control of day-to-day operations	Reduced startup efforts and involvement on municipalities' part

### 7.3.2 Transit Governance Strategy

A clear governance structure is important to the long-term success of transit services in Truro and Colchester. Effective governance ensures that responsibilities and decision-making processes are well-defined, promoting transparency, accountability, and consistency in service delivery. A robust governance framework will enable Truro, Colchester, and CTCL to set clear objectives, monitor progress, and make informed decisions that align with community needs and priorities. A clear governance structure will also make it easier to plan for future expansion, secure funding, and implement improvements, ensuring that the transit service can grow and evolve to align with community needs. Risk management is another important piece which can be established through governance. A strong governance structure can help manage challenges, resolve conflicts, and mitigate operational risks and ensure continuity of services.

Truro and Colchester are recommended to follow a similar governance structure as Pictou County Transit. Similar to Truro and Colchester, Pictou County had an existing door-to-door service provider, CHAD Transit, which they partnered with to operate their public transit services. Another similarity is that Pictou County Transit provides services for multiple communities: several towns, a county municipality, and a First Nation. While CHAD transit operates Pictou County Transit, they have their own Boards and Pictou County Transit is owned by the municipalities.

Truro and Colchester should similarly create a separate Board made up of elected officials from the two municipalities to govern the public transit services which is provided in partnership with CTCL. This Board should, at minimum, consist of elected representatives and municipal staff from each of Truro, Colchester, and (if the First Nation elects to participate) Millbrook First Nation, as well as the designated manager of the transit organization. The Board should have the authority to approve transit-related decisions, as operational challenges could arise if every minor change required approval from multiple Councils. Councils of funding municipalities would review the proposed transit budget on an annual basis, as is typical of municipalities that fund other transit systems.

Multi-jurisdictional transit systems, such as the one proposed for Truro and Colchester, require a funding agreement for their operation. This is subject to further discussion between the partner municipalities. The proportion of funding allocated by each municipality could be based on factors such as:

- A direct 50-50 split between the Town of Truro and Municipality of Colchester
- Overall population of each participating municipality
- Combined population and jobs numbers for each participating municipality
- Proportion of revenue kilometres within each municipality
- Proportion of revenue operating hours within each municipality
- Proportional share of collected residential and commercial tax revenue in the communities served

The governance of transit in Truro and Colchester will be different than a regional system such as Waterloo Region's GRT, as there is no single regional government authority that has jurisdiction over the entirety of Truro and Colchester. Portions of the system operating in Colchester are assumed to be funded by the Municipality of Colchester, as many communities around the Municipality are not separately incorporated, with the exception of Bible Hill, which may also be a key partner in this venture. In the case of Kings Transit, service is jointly owned by the Counties of Kings and Annapolis, the District of Digby, and the Towns of Berwick, Middleton, Kentville, and Wolfville.

Transit vehicle fleet would be owned by CTCL as the transit service provider, which is similar to how things are done in Pictou County. CTCL would operate, fuel, and maintain the transit vehicles, and would be paid to do so by

the funding municipalities according to the agreement. Passenger infrastructure such as concrete pads, signs and posts, benches, and shelters would be standardized across the transit service area and maintained by the public works department of whichever municipality the stop is located in. Transit stops in Truro should not look different from transit stops in Colchester. Maintenance of transit stop infrastructure should leverage existing staff who are experienced with road maintenance and would be accounted separately as an item in the transit budget, rather than the roads budget.

Maintenance of benches and shelters is often done by an advertising contractor in many transit systems, as the advertising company maintains passenger infrastructure in exchange for the rights to advertise at transit stops. This reduces costs for municipal budgets and can enable transit systems to have more benches and shelters than they otherwise would, depending on the terms of the contract. The feasibility of this type of contract should be investigated by Truro and Colchester. If this is not feasible, maintenance would revert to the municipalities and would be paid as an item in the transit budget.

Millbrook First Nation should be engaged as a potential funding partner for service operating within the First Nation, which could be allocated based on when the bus enters and leaves the First Nation's boundaries, as is the case with Curve Lake First Nation's transit service in Ontario. Other communities that could be consulted on the operation of transit within a First Nation include Thunder Bay, Ontario, which operates transit in Fort William First Nation, and Calgary, Alberta, which is currently engaged with Tsuut'ina First Nation on the subject of transit service to the Nation's Taza development. A potential future extension to Buffalo Run in Tsuut'ina was announced as part of Calgary Transit's network review project in early 2026.

As the partner municipalities move forward with transit implementation, the exact proportion of funding contributed by each of Truro and Colchester will need to be confirmed.

**Key recommendation: Conventional transit service should be operated by CTCL on behalf of, and using vehicles procured by Truro and Colchester.**

## 8 Financial Analysis

Transit services in Truro and Colchester will require sustained and continuous public investment. This consists of capital start-up costs, annual operating costs, and future capital costs related to maintaining a state of good repair. This section provides high-level estimates of the capital and operating costs that will be needed to establish and then operate a transit system in Truro and Colchester, explores fares as a revenue source that could be used to partially offset those costs, and outlines potential sources of grant funding from senior levels of government.

### 8.1 Cost Projections

The project team developed cost projections for a CTCL-operated transit system in Truro and Colchester based on published operating statistics from other transit agencies across Canada and financial information provided by CTCL. Peer agencies were assumed to include all agencies serving communities of under 50,000 people who publish their annual operating statistics to the Canadian Urban Transit Agency, or CUTA.

#### 8.1.1 Operating Costs

Operating costs were calculated across several different cost components including vehicle operating cost, fuel cost, driver wages, insurance, administrative cost, and building operations cost. These cost components were estimated based on the following assumptions:

- **Vehicle Cost** was estimated as a value between the existing CTCL hourly vehicular cost, using smaller vehicles, and the peer cost, which generally refers to larger vehicles. Many peer systems from communities like Cobourg, Moose Jaw, Stratford (ON), or Yellowknife use full-size standard buses, which are costlier to operate and more complex to maintain than the shuttle buses that will be used in Truro and Colchester.
- **Fuel Cost** was estimated based on a reduced value of the overall fuel cost of peer transit systems around Canada. As many of these systems use full-size standard buses, a report published by the American Public Transit Association (APTA) was used to estimate the ratio of fuel consumption for shuttle buses compared to full-size standard buses. A Statistics Canada report that tracked fuel prices throughout the year 2025 found that fuel costs in Nova Scotia are 2% above the national average, so the peer cost estimate was adjusted upward to reflect this.
- **Driver Cost** was estimated based on an average of selected peer systems, as this figure was quite close to the reported hourly driver cost of CTCL in the 2024-25 fiscal year.
- **Insurance Cost** was estimated to be equivalent to CTCL's most recently published insurance cost which would cover a fleet size of seven vehicles, pro-rated over a full calendar year.
- **Facility Operations Cost** was estimated based on a peer system average per bus, proportionally allocated to the conventional transit system's proposed fleet size of seven vehicles. Operations cost of a transit garage facility would be shared between CTCL (for their existing door-to-door on-demand service), Truro, and Colchester. This costing exercise focuses on the share of the facility operation that would be included in the conventional transit system's accounts.
- **Administrative Cost** for the conventional transit system was based on the creation of two new full-time equivalent (FTE) positions dedicated to the system's management, planning, and scheduling. The cost was based on the posted salary of a Treatment Manager position at the Municipality of Colchester, which was assumed to be an equivalent level of seniority to this position.

- **Special Events Services** would be dedicated vehicle charters to meet specific events within the community where large crowds are expected. These would operate in addition to the regular fixed route service, and is more efficiently accommodated through dedicated chartering and route/service planning for the unique needs (e.g. location, expected crowds, time) of any specific event.

As many operating costs were estimated using 2023 published data, an annual escalation of 3%, which was based approximately on the Bank of Canada's published inflation rate over the years of 2016-2025, was applied to generate cost estimates in projected 2027 dollars.

### 8.1.2 Capital Costs

Estimated capital costs for the proposed conventional transit system consist of three primary components: **vehicle acquisition**, **facility development**, and **transit infrastructure installation**. These estimates are informed by municipal budgets and recent comparable projects implemented by other Canadian municipalities.

#### Vehicle Acquisition

Fleet acquisition is projected to include seven (7) primarily shuttle-style transit buses in the initial phase of service delivery. The estimated cost of vehicle procurement is based on recent purchase orders for similar vehicles by comparable municipalities. The total capital cost for fleet acquisition is estimated at a range of approximately **\$1.6-2.4 million**, inclusive of base vehicle costs and standard transit specifications. The lower end of this range corresponds to a fleet consisting entirely of shuttle-style buses, while the upper end of this range would represent six shuttle-style buses for the central service network and one full-sized bus to accommodate elevated passenger loads to and from Debert. This number could be brought down if a full-sized bus can be found at lower cost, but it is still not recommended to purchase buses that are older than their estimated useable life of 12-16 years.

The fleet size has been selected to meet initial service requirements while allowing operational flexibility during the early years of system implementation. This fleet size does not account for transit needs for large, special events. The needs for those events would be better met through chartering of dedicated bus/coach services on an ad hoc basis to meet the needs, services, and demands of the specific event, which would be through the operating budget.

#### Facility Development

Facility capital costs reflect the need to expand beyond CTCL's existing head office to support enhanced operational requirements and to function as the operations base for a conventional transit system serving both Truro and Colchester. Rather than constructing a new facility, the preferred approach assumes the renovation and adaptive reuse of an existing industrial building, which offers significant cost efficiencies relative to new construction.

The proposed storage and maintenance facility would be located in an industrial area, such as the Truro Business Park, where appropriate zoning, access, and separation from residential uses exist. The facility would be sized to accommodate no less than fourteen (14) vehicles, allowing for storage, maintenance, and charging/fueling needs of the initial transit and CTCL fleet while providing capacity for future fleet growth or potential use by other municipal vehicle operations. The estimated facility capital cost is approximately **\$4.5 million** and reflects the renovation and adaptive reuse of an existing building to serve as a combined storage and maintenance facility. This cost includes building retrofit and upgrades, the provision of indoor and outdoor vehicle storage areas, dedicated maintenance and service space, and the installation of both fueling and electric vehicle charging infrastructure. It also accounts for required electrical service upgrades and utility connections, professional design

and engineering services, permitting and regulatory approvals, and an appropriate project contingency to address unknown conditions commonly associated with the reuse of existing structures. It is assumed that the capital cost of this facility would be shared among CTCL, Truro, and Colchester, reflecting the regional nature of the transit system and the shared operational benefits.

If land is not available for facility construction within the existing portfolio of landholdings by the Town of Truro and Municipality of Colchester, it will need to be purchased. Depending on availability of land for sale, this could be a vacant parcel for building on or a suitable building that could be retrofitted to allow for vehicle storage and maintenance. In the planning and design of typical transit garages, each acre of land allows for the construction of a facility to hold ten standard transit buses, meaning approximately two acres of land would be required to store 20 vehicles. A market scan of industrial land for sale in Truro and Colchester shows a wide variance in price, ranging from **\$25,000** to **\$100,000** per acre.

## Transit Infrastructure

Transit infrastructure capital costs are estimated at approximately **\$847,000** and are directly informed by the bus stop requirements and design standards outlined in Section 6.1. These costs include the installation of signs and posts at all proposed bus stop locations to establish designated bus stop zones. In accordance with Section 6.1, concrete landing pads are proposed at bus stops to support accessible boarding and alighting, with dimensions appropriate to the vehicle type and available right-of-way. At higher-density locations, major trip generators, and key transfer points such as the proposed Civic Square transfer hub additional passenger waiting amenities including benches, shelters, lighting, and waste receptacles are included. The infrastructure cost estimate reflects a phased and scalable approach, with amenities prioritized at high-ridership locations and expanded over time based on observed demand, community feedback, and available funding, consistent with the principles described in Section 6.1 and Section 6.1.1.

The capital cost estimate for transit infrastructure does not include the construction or upgrading of sidewalks, multi-use pathways, or other active transportation facilities. Improvements to sidewalks and broader pedestrian and cycling infrastructure are assumed to be delivered separately through implementation of the Town of Truro Active Transportation Plan (2023) and related municipal programs. This approach avoids duplication of costs and recognizes that walking and cycling infrastructure improvements serve a wider range of users beyond transit passengers. Transit stop infrastructure has therefore been scoped to include only stop-specific elements such as signage, concrete landing pads, and passenger waiting amenities while relying on existing and planned active transportation investments to support safe and accessible access to transit stops.

## 8.2 Fare Strategy and Revenue Projections

This subsection explores recommended transit fares and projects overall system-wide revenue based on the recommended fare structure and estimated annual ridership.

### 8.2.1 Fare Structure

The recommended fare structure for Truro and Colchester is based on the established success of other smaller-community transit systems that have recently been established around Nova Scotia. Transit service providers must set fares at an appropriate level that they can offset a reasonable amount of operating cost without creating an excessive financial burden on riders or disincentivizing transit ridership. Transit fare structures often consist of

a variety of fare products additional to the base single-ride fare as ways of incentivizing ridership through a price break on multiple rides, or as a concession fare to benefit users who may not be as readily able to pay.

Based on successful established precedents in other jurisdictions, **the recommended starting transit fare for Truro and Colchester is \$3**. This corresponds to the existing fare in Pictou County, Colchester's nearest neighbour, as well as the fare for Halifax Transit. This fare level would enable the municipalities to recover some operating expense from fares without representing an undue burden on riders and making the cost of transit consistent with neighbouring jurisdictions. This rate is typical of "in-town" fares for transit systems. Fares for Kings Transit or for longer-distance trips in Pictou County cost more, while some other transit systems, such as Bridgewater, charge less as a way of subsidizing increased ridership.

Fare products outside the regular cash fare are available for most transit agencies. These can include bulk fares such as weekly or monthly passes, and concession fares such as youth fares, senior fares, or low-income fares. Bulk fares enable regular riders to decrease their costs per ride, while concession fares help groups that may struggle to pay a full fare continue to benefit from access to transit. Some jurisdictions also have employer fare programs, where the cost of a user's pass is partially subsidized both by the employer and the municipality. This can be beneficial in communities where large employers rely on transit to bring workers to them and benefit greatly from its access.

Many transit agencies will set the fee for a monthly pass at a level where riders will break even after 20-30 rides over the course of a month. For employment-based commuters, this is equivalent to 10-15 work days per month, while many users will benefit not just from work-based travel, but from taking transit to other essential functions such as shopping, medical appointments, public services, or social engagements. The recommended rate for a monthly transit pass in Truro and Colchester is \$70, which would correspond to approximately 23 rides in a month and is the same rate charged in Pictou County. This would anticipate and avoid potential feedback from riders if Truro and Colchester were to charge more for a transit pass than its nearest neighbour.

Concession fares for seniors are based on the principle that seniors, as recipients of a fixed income, may not be as readily able to pay for transit as working-age riders. Different jurisdictions may set their own age thresholds based on locally relevant factors for how old a given user must be to purchase a senior pass. It is recommended that Truro and Colchester adopt a seniors' pass for residents over the age of 65, which is the standard age to start withdrawing benefits through the Canada Pension Plan and corresponds to an expected age of retirement for many Canadians. The recommended rate for a monthly pass for seniors and youth (assumed to be high school students ages 13-17) is \$60, which is 85% of the rate of a standard pass and corresponds to Pictou County's senior and student fare. Children age 12 and under, as is typical in many urban systems such as Halifax, are proposed to ride for free as they are often accompanied by a fare-paying parent and can learn to use transit by travelling with their family prior to becoming fare-paying riders when they attend high school. This also avoids penalizing single-parent households, as single parents must often bring their children on transit with them if childcare options are limited.

U-Pass (or UPass) programs are administered by transit agencies and postsecondary educational institutions to provide access to transit service for students. In U-Pass programs, student enrollment fees paid to their university or college include a U-Pass fee, which is then distributed by the participating institutions to the transit agencies as fare revenue that would otherwise be paid by students. This enables students to use their student IDs to access transit services without paying on board, as the fee is paid in bulk to the agency by their institution. U-Pass programs promote ridership among postsecondary students and can provide stable, continuous sources of revenue for transit agencies. Halifax Transit's UPass program, for example, is valid for students of Dalhousie

University, NSCC, Mount Saint Vincent University, the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD), and Saint Mary's University. It is recommended that, when implementing transit, Truro and Colchester enter discussions with Dalhousie AC and NSCC Truro to initiate a U-Pass program. If a U-Pass program is not determined to be appropriate for the community, university students would pay a regular adult fare.

Low-income pass programs enable residents who may struggle with paying a standard transit fare to continue using and benefiting from the service. These programs generally require that residents demonstrate their eligibility to ensure they are available to those who most need them. In many cities that operate transit, low-income pass programs are connected to broader municipal subsidy programs, which can function as a landing pad for low-income residents looking to access local programs such as subsidized transit passes, and can reduce the amount of clerical burden on residents by requiring them to prove their eligibility only once for all programs they access. In Halifax, for example, the Affordable Access Transit Pass Program, or AATP, offers a 50% discount on the purchase price of a transit pass and is administered under the City's broader Affordable Access Program, or AAP. The AAP enables lower-income Haligonians to access affordable transit, recreation programs, facility memberships, and property tax exemptions. The city of Calgary, Alberta, operates a similar transit pass subsidy through its Fair Entry program, which provides transit passes at three rate bands: \$6.30 (90% discount), \$44.10 (65% discount), or \$63 (50% discount) per month, compared to the standard cost of \$126.

For communities that do not have the back-end infrastructure of a local municipal subsidy program, discounts can also be provided on transit fares for registered charities purchasing tickets to distribute to the people they serve. This, too, is provided by Halifax Transit, enabling registered charities to buy a minimum of 50 transit tickets at a 50% discount. In Truro and Colchester, this would enable organizations like the United Way, Maggie's Place, or Steps on Arthur to provide affordable transit access to their clients. It is recommended that this program be enacted in Truro and Colchester. Additionally, it is recommended that Truro and Colchester implement a low-income pass subsidy program in the event that the municipalities institute a framework for lower-income residents to access municipal services. To avoid potential social stigma, it is essential that these programs use standard tickets and passes – the fare media should not look any different or do anything to draw attention to users.

Selecting appropriate fare products is important for any transit system. Transit should minimize barriers to entry for potential users, and the payment of fares should be encouraged by making it as easy to do as possible. In addition to cash fares, it is recommended that the system launch with tickets (which can be purchased in books at a discount) and passes as a baseline. These fare products should be available for sale at municipal facilities such as the Colchester-East Hants Library, Rath-Eastlink Community Centre, and Douglas Street Recreation Centre, as well as retail partners to be determined by the municipalities. For example, Kings Transit has tickets available for sale at retail agents throughout the Annapolis Valley including several Pharmasave, Needs Convenience, and Sobeys stores. In Ontario's Greater Toronto Area, Presto transit fare cards are available to be purchased or re-loaded at Shoppers Drug Mart stores across the region.

To further enhance fare payment flexibility in the future, the municipalities could consider speaking to Halifax Transit about integration with the HFXGO mobile platform, especially if this platform is accepted on potential future regional buses operated by Link Nova Scotia. This could enable longer-distance trips to be made by tapping onto a Truro and Colchester bus, a regional bus, and a Halifax Transit bus. Open payment through companies like Interac could also be considered, as many agencies around North America are now equipping buses with credit and debit card readers. Credit card vendors typically do collect a small percentage of revenue from their clients, so the cost of this would need to be balanced with rider needs and the cost of other fare media like collecting cash, printing paper tickets, or any licensing fees involved with mobile payment apps.

For large special events within the service area that would require dedicated service for attendees, there is a potential for targeted partnership opportunities. Admission tickets for events could include a transit ticket to access the event, likely a specialized event service either from the central transit hub or from designated parking/access points to the event site. The subsidy or cost for such a service could be incorporated into the event ticket fees or permitting plan. As this would be in addition to normal transit operations buses for such a service would need to be arranged through any number of charter bus companies operating in Nova Scotia, with the number of buses and the level of service scaled to meet the specific needs for the event.

*Exhibit 8-1: Recommended Transit Fares*

Fare Product	Recommended Fare
<b>Base Fare</b>	\$3
<b>Ticket Book (10 tickets)</b>	\$27
<b>Monthly Pass</b>	\$70
<b>Seniors' Monthly Pass (65+)</b>	\$60
<b>Youth Monthly Pass (13-17)</b>	\$60
<b>Child Fare (12 and under)</b>	Free
<b>Bulk Charitable Ticket Purchase</b>	\$1.50 (min. 50 tickets)

## 8.2.2 Employer Pass Programs

In employer pass programs, workers are incentivized to take transit through discounted passes that are partially subsidized by their employers and by the transit agency or program funding partner. Halifax’s SmartTrip program provides a variety of commuting benefits in the Regional Municipality, including discounted transit passes through the EPass program. In this program, the employer and SmartTrip each contribute 12.5% of the cost of a pass, resulting in a savings of 25% per month for each employee using the pass, reducing the user cost of a typical \$90 transit pass to \$67.50.

Similar programs to the Halifax EPass are available in other jurisdictions, such as the Ontario communities of Kingston, York Region, and Guelph. In Kingston, the Employer Transpass program provides a similar rate of discount to users as Halifax’s EPass, allowing Transpass users to purchase a bus pass for \$61.75 per month, for a savings of \$21.25 off the regular rate. In York Region, the YRT @ Work program provides a discount based on the number of employees enrolled in the program, ranging from 10-15% off the regular price. This program requires a minimum of ten employees per month for participation. In Guelph, the OnYourWay2Work program provides employees with a 20% discount on transit fares, with the employer and the transit agency each covering 10% of the cost.

In Truro and Colchester, an employer pass program may benefit employers and employees alike, enabling employers to attract and retain workers and employees to save money on their daily trips to and from their workplaces. This could be particularly relevant in Debert, where employers have reported challenges with workforce attraction and absenteeism due to the difficulty in accessing businesses from populated areas. Major employers around the region, including Debert, should be engaged on the launch of a similar employer pass program when transit service is implemented in the region. To maintain a sense of fairness, the municipalities and

employers should contribute the same share towards the discounted pass rate, as is done in other communities where these programs have been successfully implemented.

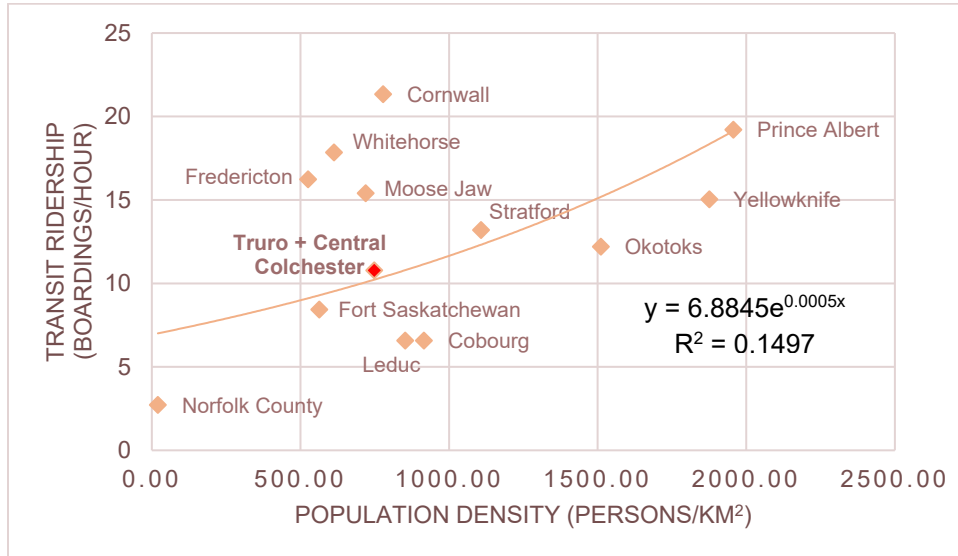
### 8.2.3 Ridership and Revenue Projections

To estimate operating revenue, a high-level projection of system-wide ridership in Truro and Colchester was conducted. Ridership estimates were developed as a function of passengers per operating hour, as transit ridership correlates with operating investment: transit riders can only use a service to the extent that it is present in the community. Passengers per operating hour are a key metric for transit agencies, and should be tracked as an operating statistic when the service is operating. More information on key performance metrics that Truro and Colchester should track is provided in Section 10: Implementation Plan.

Ridership estimates were developed based on population and density statistics published by Statistics Canada in the 2021 federal Census along with annual ridership statistics published by the Canadian Urban Transit Agency (CUTA). Twelve peer municipalities were used to develop these estimates: Cobourg (ON), Cornwall (ON), Fort Saskatchewan (AB), Fredericton (NB), Leduc (AB), Moose Jaw (SK), Norfolk County (ON), Okotoks (AB), Prince Albert (SK), Stratford (ON), Whitehorse (YT), and Yellowknife (NT). No agencies in Nova Scotia other than Halifax Transit have recently reported numbers to CUTA, which made it more difficult to find appropriate comparables without looking to other provinces and territories.

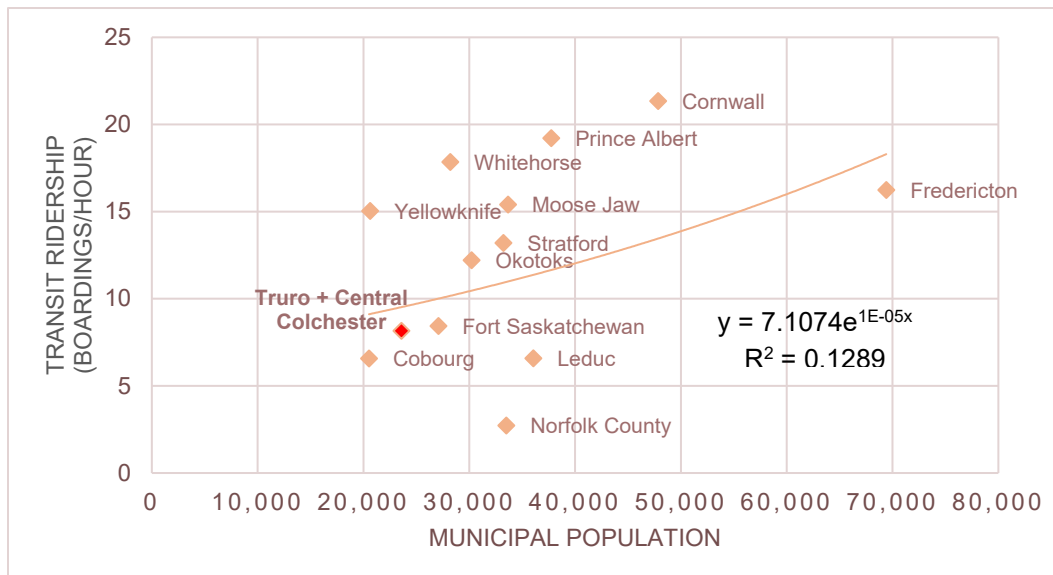
Transit ridership generally correlates positively with population density. The denser a community, the more transit ridership it typically generates, as each transit stop would have a larger population living within a walkable catchment area. Denser communities often (but not always) have more mixed land use, which promotes transit ridership, as a given route or corridor can serve a variety of land uses and, thus, a variety of trip purposes. An exponential regression analysis was conducted to estimate hourly transit ridership in Truro and Colchester relative to its overall density. Truro and Central Colchester had a Census population of 23,583 in 2021 over an area of 31.52km, for an overall density of 748.19 persons per square kilometre. These values correspond to the Population Centre of Truro and Central Colchester as defined by Statistics Canada, which is aligned with the service area of the conceptual network and includes Truro, Bible Hill, Valley, Salmon River, Millbrook First Nation, Truro Heights, and Lower Truro. The results of this regression are shown in Exhibit 8-2 below.

Exhibit 8-2: Population Density/Transit Ridership Regression



While population density is a driver of transit ridership, it is not the only factor to consider in projecting potential ridership volumes. Larger communities also tend to experience higher transit ridership than smaller ones do, as these communities generally have larger employers and access to the type of major destinations that can drive transit ridership. Another exponential regression analysis was conducted to estimate transit ridership in relation to the overall population of a community. The results of this regression are shown in Exhibit 8-2. While the results of this regression are not as closely correlated as the population density analysis, some more populous communities such as Fredericton and Cornwall stand out for their higher ridership numbers that could not be explained by density alone.

Exhibit 8-3: Municipal Population/Ridership Regression



The results of the two regressions were used to develop estimates for high and low transit ridership scenarios for the purpose of cost and revenue estimation. The two analyses resulted in an estimate of approximately 8-11 boardings per revenue hour for transit services in Truro and Colchester, with 8.2 boardings per hour in the lower ridership scenario and 10.8 boardings per hour in the higher ridership scenario.

A summary of observed ridership percentile values, given in passengers per revenue hour, is shown below. The 25<sup>th</sup> percentile value of 8.0 passengers per revenue hour can be considered a lower expectation of what could reasonably be expected for transit service in Truro and Colchester, and it aligns with the lower ridership scenario value of 8.2 boardings per hour. The 50<sup>th</sup> percentile value of 14.1 passengers per revenue hour would place Truro and Colchester just above Stratford and below Yellowknife, while the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile value of 16.6 passengers per hour would place Truro and Colchester above Fredericton and approaching the most productive systems reviewed including Whitehorse, Prince Albert, and Cornwall. This would represent a very high level of ridership uptake from the community and generate substantial revenue. If this level of ridership were achieved, it would suggest that, if capital funding could be found for fleet expansion, a second bus should be added on popular corridors to achieve 30-minute headways.

*Exhibit 8-4: Percentile Ridership Values of Peer Systems*

Percentile	Passengers/ Revenue Hour
25	8.0
50	14.1
75	16.6

It is also important to note that these ridership and revenue projections are based off typical expected service days – any special events days or services by their nature would be exceptional to this, and would likely be unique to the event and specific event plan in place.

A review of peer transit agencies across Canada in communities of under 50,000 people found that transit agencies, on average, recover approximately 65% of their base cash fare in revenue per passenger boarding. This accounts for the fact that the average fare received is less than the base fare due to the presence of passes and concession fares. Based on a total service investment of 24,500 annual service hours in the conceptual transit network, a total annual system-wide ridership of 200,000 to 265,000 was projected, resulting in revenues ranging from \$390,000 to \$515,000. These values were compared to the overall operating cost to determine the net municipal annual operating investment, which is explored in greater detail in the following section. The resulting revenue/cost ratios of 20.2% and 27.1%, respectively, are aligned reasonably with observed cost recovery rates in the Annapolis Valley (24.6%), Bridgewater (27.2%), and Halifax (28.7%).

A catchment-based approach for ridership estimation was calculated to further validate the ridership ranges estimated based off municipal population. This provides a conservative cross-check and helps explain potential differences between population-based and service-investment-based projections. This cross-check was prepared by using the residential population within a 500 m walkable catchment in Truro and Colchester, local trip rates (from UGTPI), and an assumed transit mode share informed by UGPTI.

The catchment-based ridership cross-check, using the UGPTI Rural Transit Fact Book (2022) as the source for behavioural parameters, is a bottom-up estimate prepared from residents within a 500 m walkable catchment of the proposed route. Inputs were:

- Catchment population = 23,000;

- Average daily trips per person = 3.4 (UGPTI, 2022); and
- Transit mode share = 0.6% (UGPTI, 2022).

The calculation used is: Daily transit trips = catchment population x average daily trips per person x transit mode share. This is  $23,000 \times 3.4 \times 0.006$ , or approximately 469 trips per day, which annualises to approximately  $469 \times 365 \approx 171,000$  boardings per year.

This estimate assumes one boarding per transit trip (i.e., does not add extra boardings for transfers) and counts only resident-origin trips within the 500 m catchment. The resulting figure is a conservative validation compared with the peer/service-hour method: with an annual service investment of 24,500 revenue hours and an assumed productivity of 8.2–10.8 passengers per revenue hour, the peer-regression approach yields approximately 200,900 to 264,600 annual boardings. The difference can be explained by the catchment method's conservative scope (excludes non-resident riders, park-and-ride users, and transfer-related boardings) and by the fact that transit mode share and trip rates can be higher immediately adjacent to major destinations such as Downtown Truro, the Colchester-East Hants Health Centre, or the Robie Street retail corridor.

Modest adjustments to the effective catchment, the applied mode share, or accounting for transfers would align the catchment-based result with the lower end of the peer-based range. Therefore, the peer-regression/service hour estimate of 200,000–265,000 annual boardings is considered reasonable for planning and revenue projections, with the UGPTI-based catchment calculation serving as a conservative cross-check.

Revenues can also be generated by transit systems through non-fare sources. Non-fare revenue consists mainly of advertising for most transit agencies, but could also include vehicle charters, parking on transit property, land-based revenues like retail services or sales for development, and filming. These can represent as much as 5% of total revenue for large urban systems like the New York City MTA and Toronto Transit Commission, but revenue levels of 1-2% are more typical of most transit agencies. Advertising opportunities for transit agencies can be found on buses and on static infrastructure like shelters and benches. Many transit shelters and benches are maintained by third-party advertising agencies as part of their agreement with the transit agency. While non-fare revenues do generally consist of a very small share of an agency's operating budget, they are nonetheless worth pursuing as any available revenue helps when operating a public service.

### 8.3 Net Cost Estimates

The following tables summarize the net cost estimates to the municipalities over a five-year period including capital costs, operational costs, and projected revenues based on higher and lower ridership scenarios.

Exhibit 8-5: Capital and Operating Cost Estimates: Lower-Ridership Scenario

Year	Pre-Launch	1	2	3	4	5
Capital Vehicle	\$1,575,000- \$2,400,000					
Infrastructure Cost	\$847,000					
Revenue Hours		24,500	24,500	24,500	24,500	24,500
Operational Cost		\$1,960,000	\$2,015,000	\$2,080,000	\$2,140,000	\$2,205,000
Ridership Ramp-Up		50%	75%	100%	100%	100%
Estimated Ridership		102,000	155,000	210,000	213,000	217,000
Fare		\$3.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$3.00
Estimated Revenue		\$198,900	\$302,250	\$409,500	\$415,350	\$423,150
Net Budget Impact	\$2,422,000- \$3,247,000	\$1,761,100	\$1,712,750	\$1,670,500	\$1,724,650	\$1,781,850

Exhibit 8-6: Capital and Operating Cost Estimates: Higher-Ridership Scenario

Year	Pre-Launch	1	2	3	4	5
Capital Vehicle	\$1,575,000- \$2,400,000					
Infrastructure Cost	\$847,000					
Revenue Hours		24,500	24,500	24,500	24,500	24,500
Operational Cost		\$1,960,000	\$2,015,000	\$2,080,000	\$2,140,000	\$2,205,000
Ridership Ramp-Up		50%	75%	100%	100%	100%
Estimated Ridership		134,000	205,000	277,000	282,000	286,000
Fare		\$3.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$3.00
Estimated Revenue		\$261,300	\$399,750	\$540,150	\$549,900	\$557,700
Net Budget Impact	\$2,422,000- \$3,247,000	\$1,698,700	\$1,615,250	\$1,539,850	\$1,590,100	\$1,647,300

**Operating costs** are estimated as outlined in Section 8.1.1, with the 3% annual escalation factor assumed to reflect the rate of inflation over the five years following the launch of the transit system. **Capital costs** are broken down into three categories as described in Section 8.1.2: fleet purchase, construction of an operating facility, and construction and installation of bus stop infrastructure. The cost of these items is assumed to be paid prior to the system’s launch at a cost of just under \$7 million, which could be lowered if the municipalities forego the construction of a new vehicle garage in favour of a temporary home for parking buses.

Operating cost estimates over the five-year period **do not include fare increases**, which illustrates the potential for operating budgets to escalate slowly over time if additional revenue cannot be found. Fare increases must be considered sensitively by transit agencies as costs increase over time. Increasing fares too frequently and/or by large amounts can discourage residents from using transit and may be perceived as punitive towards members of the community who are least able to pay more.

**Facility costs** are summarized in Exhibit 8-7. These capital costs would correspond to a facility that would house CTCL’s vehicle fleet for its on-demand door-to-door service and the vehicle fleet for the conventional transit

network. Values are based on approximate costs of recent transit garage projects and a market scan of industrial land for sale in Truro and Colchester, with contingency costs to account for the potential variance in facility construction cost pending a detailed design. The garage would need to be designed for the operational needs of CTCL and the conventional transit network by a qualified architect that is familiar with designing significant vehicle garages. This expense could be paid prior to or following the launch of the transit network. If the garage facility is not built prior to the launch of transit service, a temporary home would need to be found for both the conventional transit fleet and CTCL’s existing and proposed vehicle fleet. CTCL have advised in the recent past that their existing headquarters is over capacity and cannot handle the fleet they need to expand their service.

Exhibit 8-7: Facility Costs

Item	Cost
Land Acquisition	\$200,000
Facility Design	\$3,500,000
Contingency	\$1,000,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,700,000</b>

The operating costs of the **rural shuttle service** are provided as a separate item. The capital cost of the rural shuttle is one additional bus, while the infrastructure cost of constructing bus stops is assumed to be one-seventh that of the urban bus routes. If rural shuttle stops are treated differently, this cost would be lowered. Operating costs are reflective of one bus operating six days a week from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Fares, at \$5, are set higher than the urban transit system to reflect a higher operating cost over long distances, which corresponds to other long-distance rural transit services and is the same fare charged by Pictou County for their longer-distance Route 2. The net operating budget impact is expected to increase moderately over time.

Exhibit 8-8: Capital and Operating Costs: Rural Shuttle Concept

Year	Pre-Launch	1	2	3	4	5
Capital Vehicle	\$225,000					
Infrastructure Cost	\$121,000					
Revenue Hours		3,600	3,600	3,600	3,600	3,600
Operational Cost		\$288,000	\$296,000	\$305,000	\$314,000	\$324,000
Ridership Ramp-Up		50%	75%	100%	100%	100%
Estimated Ridership		3,100	4,700	6,400	6,500	6,600
Fare		\$5.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$5.00
Estimated Revenue		\$15,500	\$23,500	\$32,000	\$32,500	\$33,000
Net Budget Impact	\$346,000	\$272,500	\$272,500	\$273,000	\$281,500	\$291,000

## 8.4 Funding and Partnerships

Funding sources are available from senior levels of government for capital and operating expenditures related to public transit. This section explores potential provincial and federal transit grants and examines whether they could be viable funding sources for transit in Truro and Colchester.

### **8.4.1 Federal Rural Transit Solution Fund**

The Federal government's Rural Transit Solutions Fund program is targeting the development of transit solutions in rural, remote, northern and Indigenous communities to improve mobility within and between communities. The fund provides two streams for which applicants can seek funding. Eligible applicants can seek grants of up to \$50,000 in support of planning activities; up to \$10 million to cover capital for experienced organizations or a completed public transit feasibility study (dated after January 1, 2020). New organizations without a recent feasibility study may qualify for up to \$250,000 in funding.

The application period for both programs closed on March 4, 2025, and intake is expected to reopen. This is a viable funding source provided the intake reopens.

### **8.4.2 Federal Community Building Fund**

Canada Community-Building Fund (CCBF), previously named the Federal Gas Tax Fund, is a source of infrastructure capital funding for provincial and municipal governments. The funding is distributed from the Federal government to the Province, and then to the Nova Scotia Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing before being distributed to the municipalities. Municipal allocation is based on population per capita. Over the next five years, the CCBF will invest over \$318.8 million in Nova Scotia, starting with \$60.7 million in 2024-2025. Public transit infrastructure is eligible for funding under this program.

Dependent on the existing and planned allocation of the Partners' funding for 2025 (and beyond), they could recommend allocating a portion of the funding for any capital investment incurred from a future transit service. As such, this fund is a viable funding source for capital expenditures.

### **8.4.3 Federal Public Transit Fund**

The Canada Public Transit Fund (CPTF) offers three funding pathways: Metro-Region Agreements; Baseline Funding; and Targeted Funding. This program intends to improve and increase the use of public transit, increase housing supply as part of transit-oriented communities, and help mitigate climate change.

The Baseline Funding stream invests in expanding, rehabilitating, and replacing existing public transit and active transportation infrastructure. There must be a minimum of three years of historical ridership data with a minimum annual ridership of 30,000. As well, the transit service must include fixed route service. For these reasons, this fund is likely not a viable funding source.

The third stream of the CPTF is the Targeted Funding which provides a regular series of calls for applications for specific types of public transit and active transportation projects. This stream has previously supported rural transit on demand projects. There are not currently open calls for applications but in the future, this may be a viable funding source.

### **8.4.4 Provincial Public Transit Assistance Program**

The Public Transit Assistance Program (PTAP) as organized by Link Nova Scotia provides municipalities with funding for capital expenses for fixed route services. The funding is based on the total annual ridership and the population of the service area. Transit services in their pilot phase are not eligible for funding, therefore this is not a viable funding source currently.

### **8.4.5 Provincial Community Transportation Assistance Program**

The Community Transportation Assistance Program (CTAP) provides funding to municipalities to cover some of the operating costs of a community-based, door-to-door transportation service. Community Transportation services improve transportation options to rural Nova Scotians, focusing on access to medical appointments, education, and recreational opportunities. Organizations are required to provide a feasibility study and business plan for approval. This is not a viable funding source.

## 9 Economic Impact Analysis

The case study analysis provided valuable insights not only into the operational aspects of small-urban transit systems but also into the broader impacts these systems have on the communities they serve. These impacts extend well beyond transit and can have far-reaching effects on social, economic, employment, housing, infrastructure, and the environment within the community.

These considerations are intended to help the Town of Truro and the Municipality of Colchester understand the potential benefits and challenges that may arise from implementing a transit system. While not exhaustive, they summarize key themes observed in the case study communities and outline how similar outcomes could apply in Colchester's context. The subsections that follow provide a detailed description of these impacts, highlighting potential benefits for residents, businesses, and the region. Ultimately, these impacts should be viewed alongside operational and financial feasibility to ensure that transit planning in Colchester balances community benefits with long-term sustainability and resource considerations.

### 9.1 Social Impacts

Transit systems play a significant role in supporting social equity, cohesion, and inclusion. Enhanced access to essential services such as healthcare, groceries, education, and social supports, is a well-documented benefit of public transit, particularly in rural and small-urban communities. Rural populations, in particular seniors, individuals with disabilities, students, and low-income residents, often face significant barriers when personal vehicle use is either unaffordable or unavailable, which directly impacts their overall quality of life and sense of belonging in community<sup>5</sup>. By providing affordable and reliable mobility options, transit ensures that all residents, regardless of age, income, or ability, can participate in community life.

For Truro and Colchester, these challenges are amplified by limited transportation alternatives. Existing options such as CTCL's booked service are often at capacity, require advance notice, or lack evening and weekend availability. Taxi services offer limited accessibility and can be cost-prohibitive, while walking and cycling are constrained by distance, weather, and carrying capacity (e.g., groceries).

The introduction of public transit could substantially enhance social outcomes. Youth would benefit from improved access to after-school programs, part-time employment, and recreational opportunities, reducing dependence on parents or caregivers for transportation. Low-income working residents would have stable access to essential amenities such as groceries, business hubs for employment and community events. Seniors would gain independence and the ability to age in place with dignity by reliably accessing healthcare, shopping, and social activities.

Public transit also has the potential to foster stronger regional ties. By linking Truro with surrounding communities, such as Millbrook, Debert, and Bible Hill, residents can participate more fully in regional services and events, thereby building cohesion across Colchester County. In this way, transit serves not only as a means of moving people but also as an investment in inclusive growth and stronger social infrastructure.

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<sup>5</sup> Rural Recognition: Affordable and Safe Transportation Options for Remote Communities. [Institute for Research on Public Policy](#)

## 9.2 Economic Impacts

Public transit systems in small and mid-sized communities can play a critical role in supporting local and regional economic activity. Beyond the direct employment required to operate and administer services, transit enables broader participation in the workforce by reducing mobility barriers for those without access to a private vehicle. This benefits employers just as much as it expands their available labour pool for local employees. Furthermore, by reducing dependence on private vehicles, transit can help reduce or even eliminate the capital and operating costs associated with owning a personal vehicle.

In addition to the benefits that transit can have on the workforce, it can also increase customer access to local businesses. Transit systems serving downtowns and major commercial areas enable residents to access shopping districts and service centers more easily, thereby promoting local demand and economic activity. Expanding transit to rural or dispersed areas extends these benefits to smaller communities, ensuring that local businesses outside of core service areas remain connected to larger regional markets. From a municipal perspective, investment in transit can yield indirect fiscal benefits. Increased economic participation supports personal and business incomes, which in turn generate tax revenues at both the local and provincial levels.

While the true economic impact of introducing a transit system in Colchester can't be predicted, the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) has published financial statistics up to 2023 for Nova Scotia (NS) and across Canada. Total passenger fare revenue across all public transit in NS peaked in 2019 at approximately \$37.1 million before the COVID-19 pandemic. Although data is unavailable for 2022–2025, revenue recovered to \$22.7 million in 2021 after declining to a 10-year low of \$15.8 million in 2020, which is largely attributed to COVID-19 restrictions. In 2023, total national transit revenue reached \$5.8 billion, supported by an estimated service area population of 26 million people and \$10.84 billion in capital funding sources, largely from provincial, federal, and municipal contributions.

CUTA's 2019 issue paper, "The Economic Impact of Transit Investment in Canada", further highlights the magnitude of public transit's contribution to Canada's economy. The study estimated that the national transit industry generates at least \$19 billion in annual economic benefits, directly employs approximately 59,600 Canadians, and supports over 65,000 jobs through capital investments. According to the same study, transit reduces personal vehicle operating costs by approximately \$12.6 billion annually and generates around \$609 million in annual tax revenues from capital investment alone.

While these figures represent provincial and national estimates, they illustrate the scale of benefits that even modest local systems can achieve through reduced vehicle dependence, increased employment access, and access to local spending. For Colchester, the economic implications of a future transit system could be significant. Improved access to employment, education, healthcare, and commercial areas can enhance workforce participation, strengthen downtown commercial vitality, and support the town's regional service hub ambitions. Even a small-scale, reliable transit system could generate measurable economic multipliers by reducing mobility barriers and fostering more inclusive access to opportunity.

Research from multiple jurisdictions indicates a positive correlation between the implementation of public transit and increases in nearby property values<sup>6</sup>. Residential properties located within 20-minute walk to transit stations

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<sup>6</sup> Evaluating Transportation Economic Development Impacts. [Victoria Transport Policy Institute](https://www.vtpi.com/)

have been shown to experience appreciation in the range of 4–10%<sup>7</sup>, while commercial properties may see increases between 5–40%<sup>6,7</sup>, depending on service type, frequency, and local market characteristics.

Applying these ranges to current average property values within Truro and Colchester suggests that even modest transit investment has the potential to contribute to incremental real estate value growth (see Exhibit 9-1).

Although comprehensive commercial property data for the region is limited, the residential estimates illustrate the broader economic implications associated with improved mobility and land-use efficiency.

*Exhibit 9-1: Residential Property Appreciation Estimates*

Input	Truro		Colchester	
<b>Average Property Value<sup>8</sup></b>	\$344,560		\$365,514	
<b>Appreciation Estimate<sup>6</sup></b>	5%	10%	5%	10%
<b>Increase (\$)</b>	\$17,228	\$34,456	\$18,276	\$36,551

### 9.3 Tourism Impacts

Public transit can generate significant benefits for the tourism sector, particularly in small urban and regional centers that serve as gateways to surrounding attractions. Accessible and affordable transit provides visitors with a convenient way to reach hotels, cultural sites, shopping districts, and recreational facilities without relying on private vehicles. As supported by the case study analysis, local transit within each of the case study locations has contributed to the tourism economy by facilitating easier navigation of the town, attendance at events, and support for local businesses.

For Truro and Colchester, transit could strengthen its role as a regional hub and a popular destination for visitors. A reliable transit service would enable tourists arriving without a personal vehicle to connect seamlessly to accommodations, attractions, and events within the community. Improved transit connections could also enhance access to regional destinations.

In addition to visitor spending, transit can also support the tourism economy by improving workforce access. Students or seasonal employees, who are often younger workers without reliable access to vehicles, would benefit from affordable transportation to jobs. Over time, enhanced mobility for both visitors and employees can contribute to a more active tourism economy in Truro and Colchester.

### 9.4 Employment and Population Impacts

Transit systems can have notable effects on community demographics. By enhancing mobility, communities become more attractive to young families, seniors, and individuals without access to a private vehicle. The availability of transit can support a community's ability to retain youth populations by ensuring access to schools and part-time employment, while also providing seniors with the independence required to age in place.

<sup>7</sup> The effect of bus rapid transit on local home prices. [Research in Transportation Economics](#)

<sup>8</sup> Truro and Colchester Housing Market Outlook (2026) [REMAX](#)

Looking more broadly at the impacts on employment that a transit system can have at the most basic level, operating a public transit system creates jobs for drivers, dispatchers, schedulers, and administrative staff. Transit systems can also support indirect employment by contributing to local economic development.

More importantly, as described above, transit enables broader workforce participation by connecting residents to employment opportunities. Reliable transit access has been associated with increased employment probabilities of 2–10%<sup>9</sup>, demonstrating the value of predictable mobility for workers seeking stable access to job opportunities. Case studies consistently showed that transit is most often used to access jobs in retail, healthcare, education, and service sectors. Fixed-route transit in particular has been critical for employees commuting to hospitals, schools, and shopping centers. Similarly, on-demand services in rural areas help ensure that residents in smaller communities can reach employment hubs in nearby towns.

In Truro and Colchester's context, reliable transit could help support growth and stability across Colchester County. A transit connection between Truro and Debert, identified as a major employment hub with a documented labour force replacement ratio of 0.67<sup>10</sup>, could help address labour shortages by broadening access for workers who cannot reliably commute by private vehicle.

Improved connectivity can counterbalance rural depopulation trends by enabling residents in smaller communities to remain in place while still accessing essential services, education, and employment opportunities. Transit could reduce barriers for those without access to a vehicle, particularly youth and lower-income residents. Affordable and reliable transit would also strengthen the seasonal workforce, supporting tourism, retail, and hospitality jobs by making positions accessible to individuals who might otherwise be excluded due to transportation challenges. Over time, enhanced workforce mobility can contribute to greater economic resilience and competitiveness for the town and the surrounding region.

## 9.5 Regional Infrastructure and Housing

Transit is closely linked to patterns of infrastructure development and housing. Many people, particularly students, seniors, low-income individuals, and those with accessibility challenges, choose housing based on the availability of public transit. Communities with accessible public transit are more inclusive and can attract more people to the area. It also provides those with no other means of transportation with increased access to more affordable housing, which is often located outside of urban centres.

According to CUTA's 2019 issue paper, "The Economic Impact of Transit Investment in Canada", transit systems can also influence the efficiency of local road networks and the demand for parking infrastructure. In small urban centres, transit has helped reduce traffic congestion, which is especially useful during peak hours, particularly around schools, hospitals, and commercial areas. Even modest reductions in personal vehicles can have significant effects in towns where road networks are limited and parking supply is under pressure. For municipalities, reducing reliance on personal vehicles can also delay or eliminate the need for costly investments in road widening, new intersections, or expanded parking facilities.

For Truro and Colchester, a future transit system could support housing affordability and long-term planning objectives by reducing the reliance on private vehicles, thereby lowering household transportation costs, increasing access to affordable housing, and reducing parking in downtown cores. Over time, transit investment could help attract new housing developments in Colchester's residential areas while also ensuring regional

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<sup>9</sup> Does transport help people to gain employment? [University of Leeds](#)

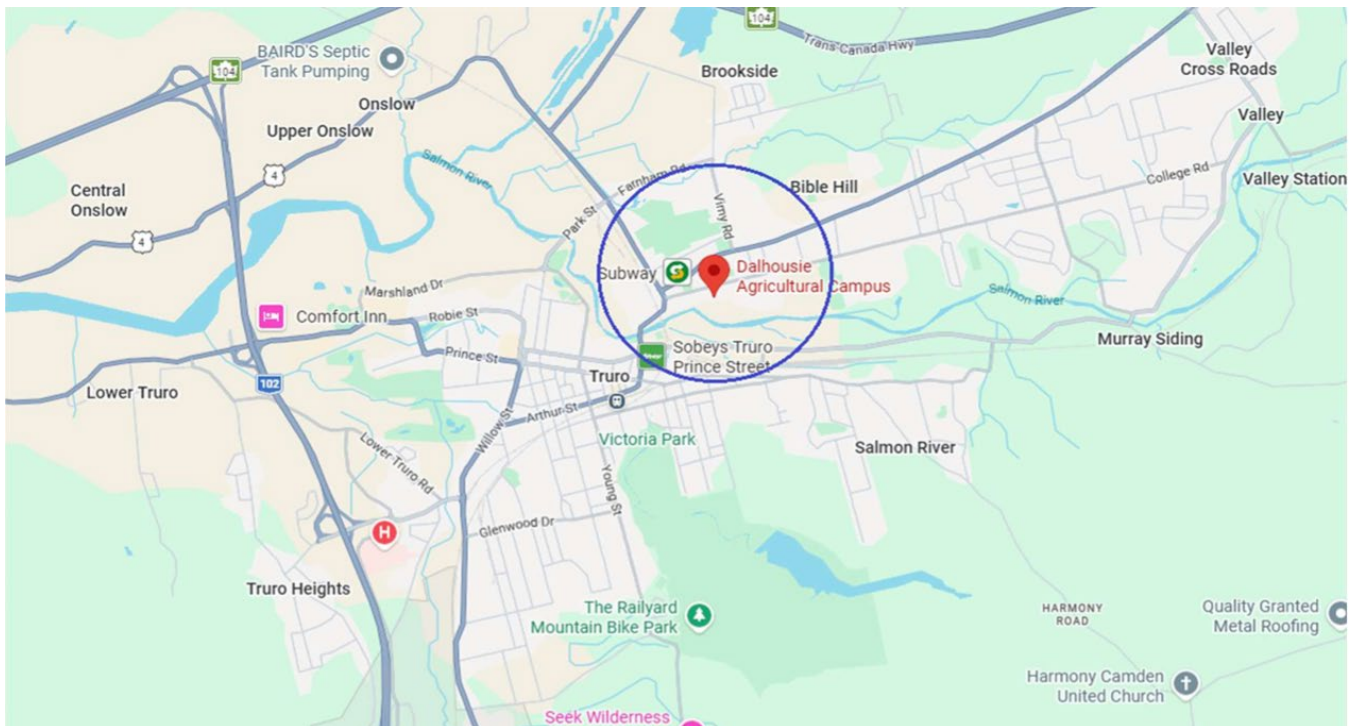
<sup>10</sup> Economic Development Summary. [Debert Business Park and Environs](#)

residents can access essential amenities. By providing reliable alternatives, transit could also improve safety by reducing traffic volumes during peak times. These reductions can contribute to more efficient land use in Truro and Colchester, freeing up space that would be needed for parking to support other community priorities such as housing, green space, or commercial development.

Truro hosts two significant post-secondary institutions, NSCC Truro Campus and Dalhousie University's Agricultural Campus, each contributing to regional population growth and economic activity. While many NSCC students are presumed to be local and have access to transportation, Dalhousie's Agricultural Campus attracts a larger proportion of students from outside the region, many of whom may not have reliable transportation.

Current off-campus housing opportunities are constrained by distance from the Dalhousie campus, with a reasonable walking catchment limited to approximately 20 minutes (see Exhibit 9-2). This restricts student choice; places pressure on nearby rental supply and increases reliance on CTCL.

*Exhibit 9-2: Estimated Dalhousie AC Student Housing Walking Distance Catchment*



A fixed-route transit system would extend the effective student housing catchment, improve access to academic, commercial, and social destinations, and reduce dependency on specialized transit services. Increased mobility for students may also contribute to stronger local spending and more efficient utilization of existing housing stock.

## 9.6 Increase CTCL Capacity for High-Needs Individuals

Rural transportation systems frequently play a critical role in serving residents with the highest mobility needs, including seniors, people with disabilities, and individuals requiring recurring medical or social service appointments. CTCL has historically filled this gap; however, growing demand from broader user groups has strained its ability to prioritize high-need clients.

Introducing a conventional public transit service, particularly routes between Truro, Debert, and key community hubs, would help shift general-purpose riders (e.g., workers, students, non-medical trips) away from CTCL. This rebalancing would allow CTCL to focus on specialized mobility needs, reduce wait times, improve booking flexibility, and enhance the overall accessibility of the transportation network.

## 9.7 Environmental Impacts

Public transit offers significant opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, improve air quality, and support climate adaptation goals. In smaller urban and rural communities, a large share of trips are made by personal vehicles. Introducing a reliable and convenient transit system can shift a portion of these trips to shared modes, directly reducing emissions proportionate to the number of riders. Even modest transit investments can generate significant reductions in car dependency, which in turn can help alleviate local traffic congestion, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and other air pollutants.

In CUTA's "The GHG Reduction Impact of Public Transit", it was highlighted that Canada's transportation sector represents 24% of carbon emissions in Canada. Canada aims to achieve a zero-emission by 2050 and has available funding to help municipalities reach this goal through public transit. According to the CUTA GHG report, it was estimated that someone can reduce their GHG emissions per km by approximately 77% if they decide to use a standard diesel bus. This reduction would be even greater with the implementation of zero-emission options such as electric buses.

For Truro and Colchester, where many residents must travel to access employment, healthcare, and education, a local and regional transit system could play a central role in advancing environmental sustainability. Reduced reliance on private vehicles would not only cut emissions but also decrease fuel costs for households, improve air quality, and contribute to broader climate resilience objectives in Nova Scotia. Transit also aligns with provincial and federal policy directions emphasizing climate action and sustainable community development.

## 10 Implementation Plan

This section provides a road map for the municipalities of Truro and Colchester to establish a public transportation system. It establishes a set of tasks to check off and steps to take to establish the necessary infrastructure for transit and maintain its consistent operation. This section also provides an overview of some monitoring tasks to continue once the service is in operation to ensure its continuous improvement.

### 10.1 Preparation For Transit Service

In this section, an overview is provided of steps needed to prepare for the launch of transit service in Truro and Colchester.

#### 10.1.1 Organizational Administration

Under the proposed governance framework with CTCL acting as service operator on behalf of Truro and Colchester, the first step will be to initiate regular discussions between the service operator and the municipalities. The future transit system, in its initial planning and continued operation, will have administrative staffing requirements. The financial plan factored in a total of two FTE positions for the administration of the new transit system, which is based on a peer system staffing level of approximately one administrative employee per four fleet buses. One of these roles is assumed to be a transit coordinator, which should be hired in the lead-up to the system's launch for the purpose of coordinating all necessary activities and initiatives.

This coordinator role will be responsible for carrying forward all tasks under an agreement between CTCL, Truro, and Colchester to establish the transit system and may be responsible for establishing this agreement at the outset of the process, depending on hiring timelines. It is advisable to speak to other community transit systems regarding operating governance partnerships, particularly Pictou (for advice on partnerships between NSTCN organizations and municipalities) and Kings (for advice on multi-jurisdictional transit systems). The resulting organization should be owned collectively by CTCL, Truro, and Colchester.

#### 10.1.2 Operating Infrastructure

Necessary operating infrastructure, particularly the vehicle fleet, will require lead time prior to the establishment of transit service. Fleet vehicles should be selected through an open procurement process that encourages competition between vehicle manufacturers. Other smaller-community systems that operate shuttle buses, such as Pictou and Bridgewater, may be able to provide insight on the vehicle options currently available on the market and the advantages of different models. Recent vehicle orders by other Canadian transit systems suggest that shuttle buses would require approximately one year for delivery from the time they are ordered. While this is not as long of a timeline as full-size standard buses, it is a non-trivial amount of time that requires substantial advance planning.

Prior to the eventual delivery of the bus fleet, a permanent and, if necessary, a temporary home should be found for the storage of transit buses. CTCL has advised in previous discussions that they have outgrown their current home and will need a new location to house their administrative and vehicle parking functions. This new location would require parking space for existing and planned CTCL vehicles, conventional transit vehicles, and potential growth buses in the event that the system expands, as it would not be prudent to identify a permanent home for transit vehicles that is not able to grow. Designated overnight parking spaces for transit vehicles should be

covered and, ideally, indoors to limit potential wear and tear from outdoor vehicle storage during inclement weather conditions.

Every proposed bus stop in the ultimate transit network, whether or not the conceptual network is modified prior to its implementation, will require at minimum a sign indicating the presence of a bus stop. Each bus stop should also have a paved area for boarding and alighting from the bus. Public sidewalks can act as a boarding and alighting zone, but sufficient paved space should allow for the maneuverability of wheelchairs and other mobility aids to ensure accessibility for potential riders. An additional concrete pad would be needed to mount a shelter or bench in place, though some benches are commercially available with the ability to sit on unpaved areas. This infrastructure will also require planning lead time to prepare for the manufacturing and installation of signs and the pouring of concrete at designated locations. Signs should be designed with distinctive and high-contrast colours, as noted in Section 6.1, and would be manufactured by the same public sign shop as other signs in Truro and Colchester.

### 10.1.3 Technology Procurement

Transit operations can be supported by technology specific to the transit industry, much of which can also be used in customer-facing applications. Examples include scheduling software, bus tracking software, and automated passenger counters.

Scheduling software is used to write and publish transit schedules, which include bus timetables, bus blocking assignments for dispatching vehicles, and rostering for bus operator shifts. Some scheduling software programs can incorporate agency requirements into the schedule of a transit network, such as timed transfers between routes, minimum layover requirements at a given location, or relief points for bus operators changing shifts.

Bus tracking software can serve several purposes: it can track and publish operational data like on-time performance or recurring delay locations, and it can also be used by customer-facing applications to demonstrate to riders where their bus is and when it will arrive at their stop. Kings Transit recently replaced their bus tracking system, and would be a valuable resource to speak to regarding this experience.

Automated passenger counters are infrared detectors that are placed at the entry and exit points of a bus to detect when riders get on or off. Transit agencies can use these devices to measure and publish ridership at a trip, route, and stop level, enabling a greater understanding of how routes and stops are being used across the system. If the procurement of APC readers is determined to be too expensive in the short term, manual counters and paper count cards can be used by operators to collect ridership information on select trips.

For all types of technology that the future transit system in Truro and Colchester could consider, it is advisable to discuss experiences and lessons learned with other established transit systems.

### 10.1.4 Bus Operator Recruitment

Prior to the launch of the transit system, bus operators will need to be recruited by CTCL to operate the new service. Across Canada, recruitment of driving staff has been a challenge experienced across several industries that are dependent upon driving-based jobs, and a similar problem has been noted by the municipalities regarding school bus drivers. Transit agencies can use many tools and strategies to recruit and retain staff. Recruitment of staff can use a variety of platforms including social media, digital advertising, job boards such as Indeed or Glassdoor, print and digital news advertising, radio advertising, or signage and advertisements in visible locations. Once a pool of employees has been built up, recruitment from existing employees' social networks can also be

effective, particularly if operators receive referral rewards for recruiting new employees. Competitive wages are essential to recruiting and retaining staff, as there are many potential competitors in other driving-based jobs and it is expensive to recruit new staff if turnover rate is high. If good benefits are provided in addition to the wages paid, these should be advertised well in recruitment.

Staff retention is critical once operators have been recruited. The job should provide operators with training resources as needed, safe working conditions, and satisfaction in providing a valuable service. Hours should be flexible where possible, with full-time and part-time hours available to staff depending on their preference. The ability to work across one continuous block of hours may represent an advantage in recruiting operators who prefer not to work AM/PM split shifts, as is the case for school buses. To the extent possible, operators should have certainty, consistency, and flexibility in their working schedules, recognizing that some working hours will be more popular than others. Reliable access to washroom facilities is another essential component of working conditions for staff who are driving for a continuous length of time and should be considered at transit hubs and turn-back locations.

Other transit agencies may have insights to share regarding the recruitment and retention of staff. Industry resources are also available through publications like the Transit Cooperative Research Program's *Bus Operator Workforce Management Practitioner's Guide* (TCRP Research Report 240), which is published by the Transportation Research Board (TRB). While the TRB is an American agency and not all lessons from this guide (e.g. health insurance) may be directly relevant, industry publications like this provide valuable information from the perspective of other transit agencies.

### 10.1.5 Marketing and Communications

In anticipation of establishing transit service, the municipalities and CTCL should develop a marketing and communications strategy to promote the new service and ensure its visibility in the community. This has been done effectively in Pictou County, where the conventional transit system has its own clear, visible identity despite being operated by CHAD Transit on behalf of the municipality, including its own branding and colour scheme and its own website. Potential marketing and communications channels for the new system could include a website, social media, print advertising, and information in news publications. This applies to channels owned by CTCL and the municipalities and to new channels (e.g. new website, new social media accounts) linked to the proposed transit system. Physical infrastructure, such as bus stop signage, can also advertise the presence of the transit system.

#### What's in a name?

In establishing the new transit service as a separate entity from CTCL's existing service, it will need its own name and branding to be used in materials like signs, rider guides, maps, and the livery on the vehicles themselves. The names of transit services are generally linked to the communities they serve in some way. Many transit agencies use simple and direct geographic names such as Halifax Transit (formerly Metro Transit), Transit Cape Breton, or Pictou County Transit. Others use names that incorporate relevant geography such as Codiac Transpo in Greater Moncton, OC (Ottawa-Carleton) Transpo in Ottawa, Railway City Transit in St. Thomas (ON), or Réseau de Transport de la Capitale (RTC, or capital transportation network) in Québec City. The name of T3 Transit in Charlottetown can be interpreted in several ways: through the slogan Take Transit Today, as a signifier of the tri-community of Charlottetown, Stratford, and Cornwall, or as a reference to the rural Transit PEI system covering the island from Tip-to-Tip.

Some names that could accomplish this within the context of Truro and Colchester could include, but are not limited to:

- Truro Transit, Colchester Transit, or Truro-Colchester Transit
- Hub Transit or Hubtown Transit
- Cobequid Transit

It is recommended that a marketing plan be developed by Truro and Colchester's marketing and communications staff to determine the future transit service's branding identity and colours.

## 10.2 Service Launch and Monitoring

Once key decisions have been made about the administration of the transit system and the vehicles have been delivered, steps will need to be taken to launch service. This section provides an overview of some necessary actions leading up to day one of transit service.

### 10.2.1 Testing and Scheduling

In advance of finalizing transit routes and schedules, road tests should be conducted using buses and operators. This has two purposes: to ensure the vehicles that have been delivered are working as they should, and to confirm planning and scheduling assumptions about the run times of proposed transit routes. Road tests can also help to identify potential problems with proposed routes with respect to stop locations, turns, lane changes, or locations that are likely to incur consistent delays.

When the municipalities and operational staff are satisfied that all proposed routes in the service network can be feasibly operated following the testing phase, schedules and timetables can be written and finalized by transit staff. Transit schedules will govern every trip on every transit route in the service network. They can be published and printed as paper copies to provide ease of trip planning for users who may not be comfortable with digital media, as well as on the transit service's website. The formatting of public-facing transit timetables typically involves the selection of key stops on the routes as **time points**, which are locations where a bus can slow down if it is ahead of schedule, making sure it leaves on time. Time points usually correspond to important intersections or destinations, and may be on the other side of a traffic screen line, such as a railway crossing or a highway bridge. The municipalities can look to established transit systems for guidance on the presentation of public-facing transit timetables.

Efforts should be made to ensure integration with public-facing travel planning apps by publishing General Transit Specification Feed, or GTFS data. This will enable bus routes and stops to show up on programs such as Google Maps, which will promote the service and increase ease of use for potential riders.

### 10.2.2 Fare Policy and Media

Before establishing and opening transit service to the public, the municipalities and CTCL will need to make determinations about the policy surrounding fares and the types of fare products that will be available to transit users. Physical fare media, such as tickets and passes, will need to be designed, printed, and made available for purchase by the public. The design of tickets and passes should be clear, distinct, and easily recognizable by transit operators, and its design should be difficult to duplicate by those acting in bad faith.

Physical non-cash fare media should be readily available at locations throughout the service area in accordance with the principle that a transit fare should be as easy and user-friendly to pay as possible. These locations should be convenient to many users around the region, as is the case with fare retailers in established transit systems such as Halifax and Kings Transit, each of which have been in operation for many decades. Private retailers, many of which have experience selling transit fares in other jurisdictions and operate businesses that provide convenient services to community residents, should be approached as potential partners. Publicly owned facilities, such as recreation centres or libraries, may also be desirable locations to sell transit passes and tickets.

### 10.2.3 Launch Date and Promotions

When all relevant parties are satisfied that the future transit system in Truro and Colchester can begin operating, a **launch date** will be selected. This can either be as a “soft launch” with a slightly reduced system or the full system initiating operations. This launch date will be the subject of a significant marketing and promotional push, which should have a clear communications plan to ensure the community is aware of the new service that is making its debut. Staff will need to be trained and prepared in the lead-up to the launch of transit service and to respond to any questions from community members as residents gradually begin to get used to the service being in place and build a greater understanding of what it can do.

The launch date of the new transit system should have a celebratory atmosphere. The marketing and communications plan should build anticipation and emphasize the positive aspects of the new service. Community leaders and elected representatives may be present for a “ribbon-cutting” function when service begins on the first trips of the day. To build anticipation and promote ridership early in the lifetime of the new service, free or reduced-price rides could be considered. Other community transit systems that have launched new services recently may have ideas for how transit could be promoted. This experience could also mimic that of urban transit systems when a new route or line is launched.

### 10.2.4 Implementation Actions

The following is a workback schedule of actions to implement transit service and the approximate timelines for each. Many of these actions are described in further detail in Section 10.1 and 10.2. Unless otherwise stated, the staff member overseeing development of the service is responsible for coordinating all of these actions. These actions include, but are not limited to:

#### Phase 1 (1-2 Years before service implementation)

- Present findings of proposed service plan, operating and capital budget, and governance recommendation to municipal Councils and enter a joint municipal commitment regarding capital commitment, operational commitment and implementation required from Town of Truro and County of Colchester.
- Hire a joint staff member for Truro and Colchester to coordinate implementation and oversee municipal interests in development of the service.
- Initiate discussions with CTCL (or, issue RFP for service provider if discussions with CTCL are not successful), and other NS community transit providers (Pictou, Kings, Bridgewater, Halifax) and work to develop and finalize a Governance Plan.
- For other operating models – develop RFP and procurement documents to procure an operator for the transit service.
- Initiate discussions and enter agreements with community stakeholders with interests in the following areas:

- Fare options (Seniors, Students, and Low-Income Groups), potential bulk pass purchasers (Educational Institutions, Large Business, and Public Health)
- Additional revenue-generating options (sponsorships, advertising, charter buses, and others)
- Private Businesses and Institutions (regarding location of Bus Stops and Transit Hub and scheduling of shifts related to service to Debert)
- Village of Bible Hill
- Initiate discussions with Millbrook First Nation on a potential service and funding agreement related to transit service operating within the First Nation's boundaries
- Initiate discussions with Municipal, Provincial and Federal partners related to:
  - Investigating capital and operational funding
  - Provincial and Municipal Authority (NSRSB, Provincial and Municipal Road Requirements, Accessibility Act)
- The staff member overseeing the service would work with the operator to ensure the proposed routing is feasible with the proper traffic authorities (lane widths, turning radii, street grades, sight distances, etc). This would include undertaking a route-by-route engineering and geometry audit. If the expertise is not available in house this work would need to be procured and undertaken by a qualified third party.
- Undertake site selection for a transit depot and transit hubs and develop a short and long-term strategy, including the development of:
  - Short-term requirements and detailed capital plan for a transit depot (land, outdoor compound, etc)
  - Longer-term requirements and detailed capital plan for a transit depot (built infrastructure, requirements and design).
  - Investigate the locations and site requirements for transit hubs (private partnerships, built infrastructure, requirements and design). Develop a strategy and detailed capital plan.
- Investigate and develop a plan, including a detailed capital plan, for bus stop placement and infrastructure requirements for bus stops (including any requirements for upgrading such things as sidewalk and landing enhancements, road widening, shoulder expansion, or sidewalk expansion). Inventory should include:
  - Risk ratings, including geometry
  - Pedestrian access limitations
  - Visibility
  - Winter maintenance challenges, and:
  - Cost implications for locations where land acquisition or easements are needed to achieve accessibility or safe stopping conditions.
- Assess additional potential municipal staffing requirements related to transit hubs/bus stops (such as garbage collection, winter maintenance and snow clearing, landscaping, etc.).
- Develop design requirements for fleet vehicles.
- Apply for capital funding for buses, depot, transit hubs, and bus stop infrastructure and investigate lead times for capital equipment.
- Receive approval for capital funding from municipal and regional councils.
- Draft RFP for vehicle fleet based off design requirements developed and procure, at a minimum, enough buses for service launch. Transit buses, depending on manufacturer availability and backlog, may take 12-24 months for delivery. Fleet providers responding to the RFP will provide an estimated timeline for their vehicles to be delivered.

Prior to entering phase two, a governance plan, service agreement with CTCL and funding structures should be finalized.

### **Phase 2 (1 Year before service implementation)**

- Draft RFP for development of transit hubs and bus stops based off site selection exercise and procure. Work such as signage manufacturing and concrete pouring should be contracted out only if it cannot be completed in-house.
- Implement short-term strategy for transit depot, including any required infrastructure development to ensure readiness in time for service launch.
- Implement strategy and infrastructure development at transit hubs, working with the relevant municipal partners.
- Establish a target service implementation date. At this stage the target date should be for internal planning and would be shared publicly when there is greater certainty in the readiness for opening, nearer the target date. Determine whether a full launch or soft launch approach is taken.
- Finalize the fare policy (including needed governance approvals) and implement the sponsorship and additional revenue plans. Incorporate fare revenue projections into annual financial planning processes moving forward.
- Develop a marketing and communications plan, branding plan, and public engagement plan.
- Investigate and procure transit scheduling software and bus tracking technology.
- Develop human resource plan around the staffing of operators and supervisors.
- Develop transit schedules and timetables for the initial service plan. Additionally, develop service guidelines in order to define at what level of ridership the process for service increases or procuring larger vehicles (if needed) should start.

### **Phase 3 (6 months before service implementation date)**

- Hire and train operational staff.
- Conduct road tests with operators and buses to ensure operators are comfortable with the routes and that the planned bus routings are feasible in reality.
- Finalize branding standards and ensure they are incorporated into the transit rollout. This could include branding on the vehicles, at the stops, and any promotional materials that would be associated with the launch of service.
- Install bus stop infrastructure.
- Test and finalize detailed schedules and timetables based off observed run times. These schedules would include blocks of work (i.e. shifts) that allow allocation of individual operators to specific runs.

### **Phase 4 (3 months before service implementation date)**

- Begin printing materials needed to promote and implement launch of service including fare media and promotional items.
- Determine where fare media will be sold, and partner with any businesses that will be selling fare media.
- Start a communications push towards service launch to ensure the public is aware, informed, ready, and excited for the start of service.
- Operators begin reviewing schedule and signing up for blocks of work.
- Finalize operator rostering assignments from sign-up results.

### **Phase 5 (Launch Day)**

- New transit service is established.
- First runs on new routes take place.

- Promotional events to push awareness of the new service.
- Monitor operations closely for potential issues to flag early on, including crowding levels, reliability of buses, adherence to schedule, customer experience, ease of use, and any additional information that needs to be clarified for customers.

### **Phase 6 (Ongoing after launch)**

- Monitor system performance and customer inquiries – including but not limited to bus reliability, fare revenue, ridership, crowding, and customer experience.
- Track and report KPIs (see Section 10.2.5).
- Report back to Councils on progress and performance of transit service and propose any service or operational adjustments needed based off system performance and feedback.
- Maintain, revise, and submit transit schedules for each board period for review by the Board and sign up for drivers. Quarterly board periods are typical. Each board period represents an opportunity to make changes to routes or schedules based on observed data or feedback from operators or passengers.
- Develop annual budgets and service plans for capital and operational improvements. Fleet expansion orders should be placed 16-24 months ahead of when new vehicles are expected to begin service. See Section 10.2.5 for more detail.

## **10.2.5 Monitoring and Key Performance Indicators**

Once the transit system is up and running, continuous monitoring will be necessary to ensure it is able to function as it should, providing consistent and reliable service to the people of Truro and Colchester. The performance of the transit system can be tracked through Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that are designed to provide insight on transit operations, ridership, and schedule adherence. These KPIs can be tracked and reported by transit planning staff to ensure service reliability, identify potential problems before they become more severe, and propose improvements or modifications to transit service.

Some transit KPIs Truro and Colchester should consider tracking include:

- Revenue vehicle kilometres and total vehicle kilometres
- Revenue vehicle hours and total vehicle hours
- System-wide ridership, ridership by route, and ridership by stop
- Crowding conditions on buses
- Passenger overload reports, if applicable
- Operating expenses, including:
  - Administrative costs
  - Fueling costs
  - Vehicle operations cost
  - Vehicle maintenance cost
  - Garage or facility maintenance cost
- Operating revenues and net operating costs
- Capital expenses related to vehicle purchases, infrastructure installation, software procurement, or any other relevant items
- Schedule adherence and on-time performance (OTP) by route and time of day
- Vehicle reliability and breakdown frequency, including mean distance between failures (MDBF)

- Volume and nature of customer service inquiries

The tracking of information like this can help transit staff to proactively monitor the transit system, ensuring it is able to function to the best of its ability. Vehicle tracking and schedule adherence data, for example, can enable staff to find places where a transit schedule may require refinement if buses are consistently running ahead of or behind schedule, and a thoughtful understanding of a bus's schedule can help to determine if future extensions may be feasible and what they would cost. Stop-by-stop ridership can be used in developing warrants for passenger waiting infrastructure like benches and shelters, ensuring these investments are prioritized where they will benefit the most riders. Vehicle purchases can stem from valuable data tracked in system operations, whether that refers to fleet replacement based on age and reliability, or fleet expansion based on crowding, ridership and customer request data. For example, the Toronto Transit Commission considers a bus to be crowded if it is at over 85% of crush capacity during peak periods, or over 60% of crush capacity (approximately a seated load on a standard bus) during other service periods. A bus typically takes 16-24 months to be delivered by the manufacturer, depending on the manufacturer's backlog of orders, so fleet and service expansion should be thoughtfully planned based on careful monitoring of data and community requests. In a pinch, Truro and Colchester could slightly compromise their spare ratio or "borrow" a vehicle from CTCL to get more service on the road sooner, but this is not a sustainable approach over the long term and would only be viable for very short periods of time.

Operating data and KPIs can also be reported to industry associations such as CUTA. By working with other transit agencies and industry associations, different transit service providers can compare ideas and experiences and learn from each other, enabling better transit not just in Truro and Colchester, but in communities beyond.

# Appendix A

## Impact Assessment Report



# Colchester Regional Transit Feasibility Study – Impact Analysis Report

March 27<sup>th</sup> 2026

P1702-1356240142-24 (2.0)

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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# Supplementary Documents

## Limitations

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Comments, conclusions, and recommendations within this report represent our opinion, which is based on an examination of the documents provided, our analysis and our experience. This report is limited to this scope of work. Design calculations have not been undertaken, nor were they part of the project scope. Our best commercial efforts to provide accurate analysis and meaningful advice are consistent with the care and skill ordinarily exercised by management consultants in Canada with the same scope of work and the same source materials. This report has been subjected to our internal review and the practices of our Quality Management System. No other representations, and no warranties or representations of any kind, either expressed or implied, are made.

# 1.0 Introduction

The Town of Truro and the Municipality of Colchester (Colchester) initiated a Transit Feasibility Study to better understand local and regional mobility needs and to evaluate opportunities for introducing public transit services within the municipality. The transit impact analysis is intended to engage residents and stakeholders, review existing travel patterns and challenges, and examine best practices from comparable rural and small urban communities to inform future transit planning. The study focuses on identifying service needs, priorities, and potential delivery approaches that respond to Colchester’s geographic context, settlement patterns, and community characteristics.

The transit impact assessment provides Colchester with an evidence-based foundation to support future decision-making related to public transit planning, service design, and implementation. The study's findings aim to inform future planning initiatives and funding considerations by identifying feasible, community-supported transit options that enhance access to employment, education, healthcare, and other essential services for residents throughout the municipality.

## 1.1 Objectives

The primary objectives of this transit impact assessment are to:

- Engage the Community and Key Stakeholders: Lead structured and inclusive engagement activities to gather input from residents, community organizations, businesses, and underrepresented groups on transportation challenges, priorities, and expectations related to potential public transit.
- Document Community Perspectives and Priorities: Collect, analyze, and summarize qualitative and quantitative feedback to identify common themes, areas of alignment, and key considerations raised through surveys, workshops, interviews, and pop-up events.
- Assess Potential Social and Economic Impacts: Evaluate the potential social, economic, and cultural impacts associated with the introduction of public transit, informed by community feedback and benchmarking of comparable Canadian and Atlantic communities.
- Benchmark Comparable Transit Initiatives: Review comparable rural and small urban transit initiatives to identify best practices, impact indicators, and outcome benchmarks relevant to the Colchester–Truro context.
- Support Evidence-Based Decision-Making: Provide the Municipality with community-informed insights and impact considerations to support future discussions related to transit planning, funding, and implementation led by others.

## 2.0 Community Engagement

Community engagement is critical to understanding the Municipality’s strategic vision for a regional public transit network and providing equitable access for residents of the Municipality of Colchester region. Our approach includes gathering feedback from municipal staff, community partners, organizations, business leaders, and underrepresented community groups to ensure we have heard a broad range of perspectives and community experiences. Feedback was gathered from key members of the Town of Truro and the Municipality of Colchester using two main strategies:

- **Public Engagement** - The team designed and distributed a series of public surveys to capture residents’ transit habits, needs, and challenges, including optional demographic questions to identify specific requirements of different community groups. The surveys were effective in engaging with large groups of people to collect specific responses to multiple-choice questions.
- **Stakeholder Engagement** – The team conducted interviews and a World Café with key groups identified by the Town of Truro and the Municipality of Colchester, including municipal staff, community organizations, business leaders, and underrepresented groups, which allowed diverse responses to the interview question to better understand the transit demand in the Town.

The engagement activities took place between March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025, and November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025. A summary of the feedback provided through each engagement is presented below.

### 2.1 Stakeholder World Café – March 25, 2025

The World Café Session is a series of group discussions designed to understand areas of alignment and concern among participants with diverse backgrounds and lived experiences. There were six tables set up, each with a different question, allowing participants 15 minutes to discuss and answer each one. As participants moved between the tables, they were encouraged to create different groups each time in order to hear diverse perspectives. Facilitators at each table guided the discussion, took notes, and identified trends throughout the session. The questions asked, and their summarized responses, can be found below.

1. How do you currently get around? What are your most travelled routes? Are there areas where transportation is unreliable or unavailable, except for personal vehicles or existing transit options?

Current Travel Methods:

- **Car Dependency:** Most residents rely on personal vehicles or shared family cars, with some carpooling (e.g., Halifax commuters).
- **Walking & Cycling:** Common in areas like Millbrook, but challenges exist due to growing distances and lack of active transportation infrastructure.
- **Public & Specialized Transit:** CTCL serves many residents, but it has service limitations. Some residents also use taxis, though they are costly and often difficult to book.
- **Other Modes:** Some use public health transportation services, particularly in Pictou and Colchester counties, but more accessible vehicles are needed.

Most Travelled Routes & Destinations:

- Frequent Travel Between:
  - **Truro & Surrounding Areas:** Common destinations include Bible Hill, Debert, Brookfield, and Salmon River.

- **Halifax & New Glasgow:** Regular trips for medical appointments, shopping, and business.
- **Local Essentials:** Service Canada, Access Nova Scotia, shopping centers, movie theaters, and NSCC campuses.

#### Challenges & Gaps in Transportation:

- Limited Public & Accessible Transit:
  - CTCL requires **3-day advance booking**, reducing flexibility.
  - No accessible transportation after **4 PM**, creating barriers for those needing evening travel.
  - Only **one accessible taxi**, and it's costly.
- High Demand & Service Limitations:
  - CTCL has a **waitlist**, reducing access for public health and regular clients.
  - **Rural areas lack transit options**, making taxis an expensive necessity.
  - Commuters, students, and workers need more frequent and expanded service hours.
- Carpooling & Alternative Solutions Needed:
  - Many NSCC students commute long distances; promoting **carpooling** could help.
  - **Subsidized transportation** to business parks could help rural workers.
  - Need for spur-of-the-moment transport solutions, as taxis have long wait times.
- Infrastructure & Safety Concerns:
  - Highway barriers (e.g., Millbrook) create division; a pedestrian bridge is needed.
  - Lack of **active transportation infrastructure** makes walking and cycling unsafe.
  - **Traffic congestion** in Colchester County is worsening.

#### Key Recommendations & Needs:

1. Expand CTCL service hours & capacity (especially after 4 PM).
  2. **Improve booking system** for more flexible, on-demand service.
  3. Increase accessible transit options, including taxis.
  4. **Enhance rural transit connections** (e.g., Young Street, service hubs, medical appointments).
  5. Subsidize transit for business parks & commuters.
  6. **Support carpooling initiatives** (e.g., designated pickup locations).
  7. Improve active transportation infrastructure for safer walking & cycling.
  8. Consider school transportation routes to support students.
2. If there were additional reliable and affordable transportation options, would you use it? What does affordable mean to you? How often would you use it? Are there certain destinations that you think would be beneficial to be connected by transit?

#### Interest in Additional Transit Options

- Strong support for more reliable, affordable transit, which would improve **independence, job access, and community connectivity**.
- Many residents **don't have access to a vehicle**, can't afford one, or don't feel comfortable driving (e.g., seniors, rural residents, individuals with disabilities).
- **CTCL is at capacity** and cannot meet demand, with some residents being denied service due to limitations.

#### Affordability & Fare Expectations

- Suggested fares:

- \$5 or less per ride
- Monthly pass option
- Sliding scale pricing based on income
- Subsidized fares** for seniors, students, and low-income residents
- Children should ride for free.
- Some suggested fare reductions for businesses & cost-sharing with employers to improve access for workers.

#### Potential Destinations & Route Priorities

- **Employment Hubs:** Debert, Truro, Valley, Millbrook, business parks, hospitals, and industrial areas.
- **Essential Services:** Access Nova Scotia, downtown, NSCC, shopping centers, Service Canada, and medical facilities.
- **Social & Recreational Destinations:** Events, movie theatres, social gatherings, seasonal work locations.
- **School & Student Transportation:** Additional routes for **NSCC students**, school times, co-ops, and camps.
- Fixed Routes & On-Demand Services:
  - Fixed route to **Debert** (employment center).
  - More routes within town and nearby communities (Willow Street, Bible Hill, Masstown, etc.).
  - On-demand vehicles for specific needs instead of fixed routes.
  - Evening & weekend service** for workers, seniors, and social events.

#### Key Needs & Recommendations

1. Expand Service Hours & Frequency:
  - Evenings & weekends** to accommodate workers, social events, and seniors.
  - Better connections to rural areas with flexible schedules.
  - Service should align with **work shifts in Debert**.
2. Improve Accessibility & Inclusivity:
  - More accessible transportation options (both physically & financially).
  - Trained drivers** on accessibility, mental health, and non-violent crisis intervention.
  - Ride-sharing services don't work well for individuals with disabilities.
3. Introduce Flexible & Tiered Transit Options:
  - Fixed routes for high-demand areas** (e.g., Debert, Valley, Bible Hill, Millbrook).
  - On-demand or shuttle services for lower-density areas.
  - Hybrid approach:** frequent service in urban/suburban areas, lower frequency in rural regions.
4. Increase Employer & Community Partnerships:
  - Employers could subsidize transit for workers.
  - Collaboration with large-scale businesses and post-secondary institutions for cost-sharing.
  - NSCC could include a transit pass in tuition for students.
5. Support for Active & Sustainable Transportation:

- Secure **bike storage** at transit hubs.
  - Environmentally friendly, clean-energy transit options.
6. Improve Affordability & Reduce Financial Barriers:
- **Fare reductions & subsidies** for seniors, students, and low-income individuals.
  - Keep transit cheaper than daily vehicle costs to encourage use.
  - Some community members hope for **free transit for all** as the region grows.
7. Community-Focused Enhancements:
- **Transit for events** (suggested fare: \$10-\$15).
  - Better transit access for families with young children.
  - **Stronger regional connections** to foster a sense of community.
  - Consider **local driving schools** (e.g., in Debert) for training new transit drivers.
3. How important is it to have more transit options in our community? Do you think transportation is a significant issue here, or is it something that primarily affects certain individuals? If new options were available, do you think they would make a difference in our community's economy, health, or quality of life?

#### Strong Community Need & Equity Considerations

- Public transit is seen as a **major issue affecting many people**, particularly **equity-deserving groups** such as seniors, people with disabilities, newcomers, students, low-income residents, and those experiencing housing insecurity.
- **Lack of transportation leads to isolation**, making it harder for people to access jobs, medical services, social events, and education.
- **Housing affordability and transit are interconnected**—many who can't afford to live in town need transit to access jobs and services from rural areas.
- **Unhoused and precariously housed individuals** rely on transit to access services such as Service Canada and employment opportunities.

#### Economic & Employment Benefits

- **Employers struggle to find workers**, while unemployed or underemployed people **can't get to available jobs** due to a lack of reliable transportation.
- Public transit would make it easier for businesses to attract workers, encouraging more businesses to open in the region.
- Students **struggle with work placements** because they can only take placements within walking distance.
- Public transit could allow students to live outside the core, reducing rental costs and increasing housing availability.
- Doctors and professionals are deterred from relocating to the area due to the limited transportation options, which affect healthcare access.

#### Quality of Life & Social Impact

- Transit **reduces social isolation**, particularly for seniors who can't drive at night or afford car ownership.

- **Transit is needed for evening and weekend events**, such as seniors attending social gatherings or young people going out safely.
- Public transit **fosters community connections, creating shared spaces where people encounter and understand diverse** experiences.
- **Access to transit empowers youth** by giving them independence and a sense of place.

#### Infrastructure & Environmental Considerations

- **Downtown congestion is worsening**, and transit could reduce traffic while making parking more available for visitors.
- **Transit would reduce carbon emissions**, helping the community meet sustainability goals.
- Protected bike lanes and secure bike storage are needed to complement transit.
- **Transit routes should be well-designed** with bus shelters and safe waiting areas.

#### Funding & Implementation Concerns

- **Affordability of transit is critical**, as high fares can exclude those who need it most.
- Some are **concerned about the financial burden on taxpayers** and prefer smaller, more efficient transit options over large buses.
- Transit **must be frequent and reliable** for ridership to grow.
- Clear communication and community buy-in are essential to overcoming stigma and ensuring success.

#### Key Route & Service Priorities

- Fixed routes to Halifax and Debert for work and essential services.
- **Frequent local routes** in and around Truro, Bible Hill, Millbrook, and Valley.
- **Evening and weekend services** to support social and employment needs.
- Better accessibility for individuals with disabilities, with trained drivers and inclusive design.

#### Takeaways

- Public transit is seen as essential for economic growth, social well-being, and environmental sustainability.
- A **well-planned, reliable, and affordable system** would **enhance the quality of life, support businesses, and foster** a stronger, more connected community.

4. What concerns or questions do you have about starting a new public transportation service? What would you like to know before deciding to support a new transportation service? Can you think of anything that would make you not want to use it?

#### Key Concerns:

- **Affordability & Fees:** Interest in multiple fare options, including monthly passes, single-trip fares, and subsidized rates for low-income individuals, seniors, and precariously housed people. Some support for no-cost transit.
- **Accessibility:** Need for accessible vehicles with lifts or ramps, trained drivers, and accommodation for mobility aids (wheelchairs, walkers). Stops should include First Nations communities.
- **Service Design:** A mix of fixed routes for urban areas and on-demand service for rural regions is preferred. Consider phased implementation, starting in urban centers and expanding outward.
- **Reliability & Convenience:** Service must be frequent, reliable, and available at peak hours, with the ability to book in advance or access last-minute rides.

- **Infrastructure & Safety:** Clean, well-maintained buses with bike racks, security cameras, and comfortable seating (no fabric). Sheltered bus stops are necessary.
- **Environmental Impact:** Preference for sustainable, electric, or zero-emission buses. Questions about how transit will integrate with active transportation (walking, biking).
- **Community & Economic Integration:** Potential for partnerships with employers to subsidize transit for workers, particularly in Debert. Integration with existing transit (CTCL) is important.
- **Public Perception & Stigma:** Concerns about the stigma surrounding public transit. A strong marketing and education campaign is needed to increase ridership and community buy-in.

Outstanding Questions:

- What will the fee schedule look like?
  - How will transit be funded sustainably, given that the industry runs deficits?
  - Will the system expand over time, and how will adjustments be made?
  - Can Truro's infrastructure support buses?
  - Will the service be convenient enough for workers, students, and last-minute trips?
  - Will active transportation options (bike lanes, pedestrian paths) be developed alongside public transit?
5. What would an ideal public transit system look like to you? Would it include variable fares for students, senior, low-income riders? How often would you expect it to run (i.e., every hour, few times a day, on-demand)? What options would you like to see included (i.e., bike racks, park and ride lots, etc.)?

An ideal public transit system should be **inclusive, affordable, accessible, and reliable** for all, with an emphasis on providing convenient services for everyone, from infants to seniors. It should run **seven days a week**, with **flexible, fixed, and on-demand routes** to accommodate both urban and rural areas, ensuring people can travel during **work hours, school hours, weekends**, and for **special events**.

Key features should include:

1. **Variable fares** (e.g., free for children, seniors, low-income users), potentially using a **sliding scale** or subsidies to ensure affordability for all.
2. Accessible infrastructure such as kneeling buses, ramps, and bike racks for convenience and accessibility.
3. **Rural options**, with **park and ride lots** and on-demand services for more isolated communities, which could help close the gap between **urban and rural transportation access**.
4. **Comprehensive coverage**, connecting communities like **Tatamagouche to Economy, Debert to Truro, Brookfield to Stewiacke**, and major hubs like malls, hospitals, and business parks.
5. A focus on **reliable, fixed routes with timely schedules** (e.g., hourly availability) and **clear information** accessible for all users, including those needing special assistance like **mental health support** or **trauma-informed care** from operators.
6. **Partnerships** with employers, non-profits, and other stakeholders for **incentives** like monthly passes, variable pay scales, and **workplace transport solutions** (e.g., shuttles for employees).
7. The inclusion of active transportation options, such as E-bike rentals and secure bike storage, to promote carbon-free and flexible transportation options.
8. **Comfortable waiting areas** that offer protection from weather, ensuring dignity for all users.

The goal is a socially acceptable, equitable, and environmentally friendly transit system that integrates with other transportation options, offers convenient services for people in both urban and rural areas, and helps address barriers such as high taxi costs, transportation to medical appointments, and getting employees to work.

6. What challenges do you face getting around? How do these challenges impact your work, access to healthcare services, or social activities? Are there any challenges related to specific times of day or days of week?

The challenges faced in accessing transportation are significant and impact various aspects of daily life, including work, healthcare, and social activities. Some of the key issues include:

1. **Lack of Resources and Flexibility:** Many transportation services, especially for non-profits, suffer from **limited resources**. This leads to **overcrowding, unavailable rides**, and long wait times, especially during **emergency situations** or **last-minute appointments**.
2. **Cost and Affordability: Transportation costs**, including taxis, are a major barrier. People can lose any potential savings from shopping or work because they must spend a significant portion on transportation. In rural areas, the cost can be even higher, and the **lack of affordable, flexible transportation** options often forces individuals to rely on **personal vehicles or family/friends**.
3. **Limited-Service Hours:** Many services, such as **CTCL** or **taxi services**, don't operate during **evenings and weekends**, leaving people without transportation options for social activities, work shifts, or medical emergencies. People are also unable to **plan for last-minute needs** or appointments, especially for **non-urgent healthcare** like dialysis.
4. **Accessibility Issues:** A lack of **physically accessible vehicles** and infrastructure, such as **wheelchair access** or **appropriate car seats for children**, makes transportation especially difficult for people with disabilities, seniors, and families with small children.
5. **Healthcare Access:** Transportation gaps prevent people from reaching essential healthcare services. People living in rural areas or **industrial parks** (e.g., **Debert**) struggle to attend regular appointments, sometimes resorting to **ambulances for consistency**. Additionally, some areas, like **Bible Hill**, face challenges accessing specific healthcare facilities, such as Methadone clinics.
6. **Employment Barriers:** Many people in rural areas are unable to reach employment opportunities due to the lack of transportation, especially in places like **Debert Industrial Park**, where transportation isn't available to cover shift times or work hours. **Low-income workers** are especially affected, as the cost of **owning a vehicle** or relying on **taxis** often exceeds their budget, making it difficult to maintain employment.
7. **Social Isolation: Lack of transportation options** contributes to **social isolation**, especially among seniors or those who can't afford taxis or private vehicles. Limited services during evenings and weekends make it difficult for people to participate in social or community events, which affect **mental health** and community integration.
8. **Systemic Issues: Scheduling constraints**, such as needing to book rides **72 hours in advance**, coupled with **limited capacity**, often result in **missed appointments**, lost work opportunities, or health risks. People in need of **transportation assistance** may also face **discrimination** or fear of being turned away based on their **life circumstances**, like **homelessness**.
9. **Community Needs:** There's a need for regional transportation approaches, such as shared rides and electric bikes, particularly in more sprawling rural areas. Areas like Millbrook and Debert struggle with poor connectivity, which limits access to services like groceries, healthcare, and work opportunities.

In summary, the challenges revolve around **affordability, accessibility, and reliability** of transportation, particularly in rural or underserved areas. **Limited resources** and **inflexible schedules** exacerbate issues, making it harder for people to access healthcare, maintain employment, and engage in social activities, which ultimately impacts their **quality of life and well-being**.

## 2.2 Public Survey #1 – April 1-27, 2025

The public survey was open from April 1-27, 2025. During that time, there were 1259 responses.

Key takeaways from the survey include:

- Majority of respondents have consistent access to a personal vehicle,
- The most common transportation options aside from personal vehicles include **walking, drives from friends and family, and taxis.**
- Almost half of the respondents require transportation every day or weekday.
- For those who have difficulty accessing transportation, the most common difficulties selected were **affordability** and **limited options**, accounting for just under half of the responses. Additional difficulties that respondents added included **infrastructure concerns** (sidewalks, roads), **sharing a car between family members**, and **safety/security concerns when using taxis.**
- The destinations that respondents would most want to be connected by public transit were **medical facilities, grocery stores/shopping centres, workplaces, and recreational facilities.** Other responses received included all options, golf courses, malls, etc.
- Some concerns respondents had with using public transit followed the difficulties they currently face with accessing transportation, additional concerns included **limited-service hours, lack of routes near home/work**, and **reliability/on-time performance.**
- Respondents were then asked what would encourage them to use public transit with the majority choosing **affordable fares, convenient schedules, and convenient routes.** Other responses included **weekend/event service** and some responded that having all would encourage them to use public transit.

A full summary of the survey responses is presented below.

1. What is your age group?
  - a. Under 18 (**16, <1%**)
  - b. 18-24 (109, 9%)
  - c. 25-34 (276, 22%)
  - d. 35-44 (265, 21%)
  - e. 45-54 (200, 16%)
  - f. 55-64 (199, 16%)
  - g. 65+ (186, 15%)
  - h. Prefer not to say (**8, <1%**)
  
2. What is your current employment status?
  - a. Employed full-time (30+ hours per week) (**701, 57%**)
  - b. Employed part-time (Less than 30 hours per week) (**104, 8%**)
  - c. Self-employed/ Freelance (**56, 4%**)
  - d. Unemployed (**28, 2%**)
  - e. Student (**54, 4%**)
  - f. Retired (216, 17%)
  - g. Stay-at-home parent (**35, 3%**)
  - h. Unable to work/disabled (**52, 4%**)
  - i. Prefer not to say (**13, 1%**)

3. Where are you typically travelling from? (Postal Code, or blank if you prefer not to say)

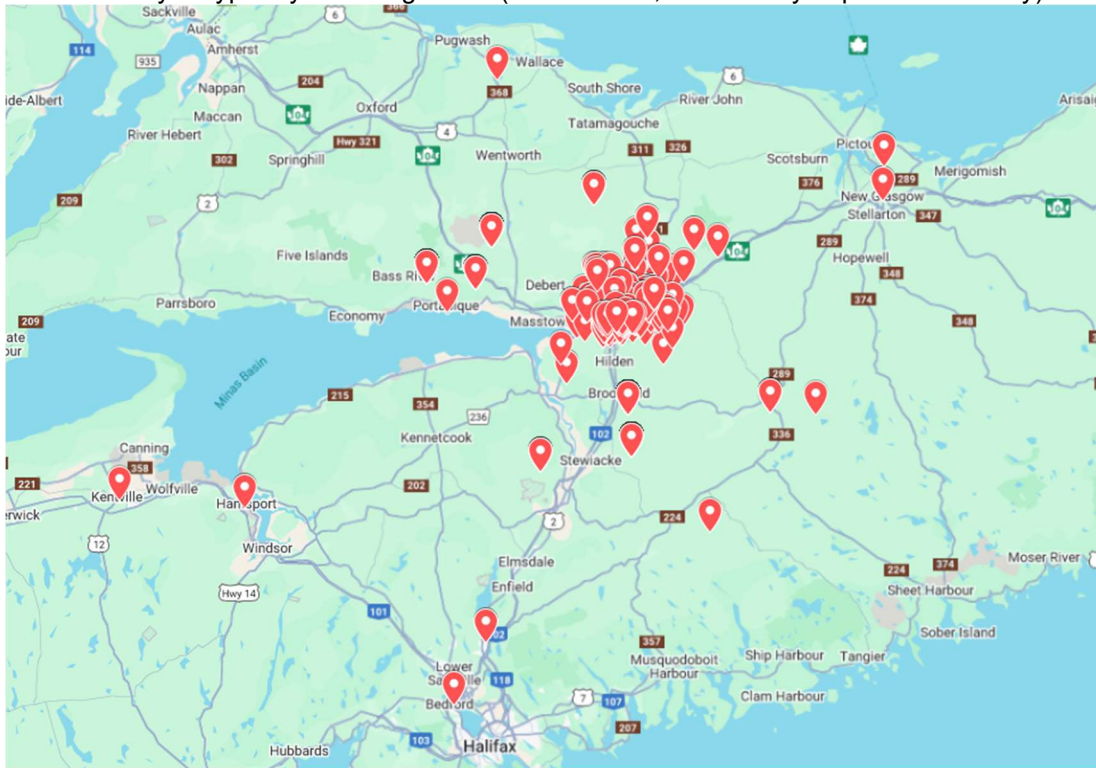


Figure 1: Distribution of the 949 responses from Question 3

4. What gender do you identify with?

- a. Woman (884, 70%)
- b. Man (331, 26%)
- c. Non-binary/non-conforming (21, 2%)
- d. Prefer not to say (22, 2%)
- e. Other? (1, <1%, Gender Fluid)

5. Do you identify with any of the following groups? (Select up to three most applicable to you)

- Indigenous Peoples (37, 3%)
- Racial or ethnic minority (63, 4%)
- 2SLGBTQIA+ (125, 9%)
- Person with a disability (200, 14%)
- Low income (252, 17%)
- Unhoused or experiencing housing instability (8, <1%)
- Previously incarcerated (1, <1%)
- Prefer not to say (91, 6%)
- I do not identify with any of the groups (664, 45%)
- Other? (29, 2%, other nationalities, specific disabilities, supporting child with a disability, etc.)

**Current State - Information Gathering**

6. Do you have access to a personal vehicle? (Select the most accurate response)

- a. I have consistent access to a personal vehicle (808, 64%)
- b. I have occasional/inconsistent access to a personal vehicle (189, 15%)

- c. I do not have access to a personal vehicle **(262, 21%)**
7. Aside from a personal vehicle, what other transportation options do you typically rely on? (Select your top 3, or less)
- CTCL Dial-a-Ride **(18, <1%)**
  - CTCL Charter Services **(4, <1%)**
  - CTCL Regular Services **(21, <1%)**
  - Taxi (448, 19%)
  - Public Health Transportation Support **(48, 2%)**
  - Car Share **(29, <1%)**
  - Carpool (104, 4%)
  - Walking (695, 29%)
  - Cycling (180, 7%)
  - Drives from friends/family **(558, 23%)**
  - I only rely on a personal vehicle **(307, 13%)**
  - Other? (8, <1%, Bike, Scooter, Uber, etc.)
8. How often do you require transportation?
- a. Never (65, 5%)
  - b. Rarely (a few times a year) **(172, 14%)**
  - c. Sometimes (a few times a month) **(202, 16%)**
  - d. Often (a few times a week) **(319, 25%)**
  - e. Always (every day or every weekday) **(501, 40%)**
9. What difficulties, if any, do you face in finding transportation for your needs? (Select all that apply)
- Affordability **(635, 25%)**
  - Limited options **(603, 23%)**
  - Requirement to book services in advance **(308, 12%)**
  - Service hour windows **(230, 9%)**
  - Accessibility **(188, 7%)**
  - Safety/security **(242, 9%)**
  - No difficulties **(324, 13%)**
  - Other? (45, 2%, infrastructure isn't safe for active transportation, other safety/security concerns, lost time waiting for taxis, sharing a car between family members)
10. How often do you have difficulty finding transportation for your needs?
- a. Never (329, 26%)
  - b. Rarely (a few times a year) **(378, 30%)**
  - c. Sometimes (a few times a month) **(296, 24%)**
  - d. Often (a few times a week) **(167, 13%)**
  - e. Always (89, 7%)
11. What destinations would you most want to be connected by public transit? (Select up to 3)
- Medical facilities **(795, 23%)**
  - Grocery stores/ shopping centres **(1034, 30%)**
  - Workplaces **(442, 13%)**
  - Schools/Colleges **(259, 8%)**
  - Recreational Facilities **(416, 12%)**
  - Nearby towns **(327, 9%)**

- Homes of friends/family **(133, 4%)**
- Other? (41, 1%, mall, golf courses, downtown Truro, bars/restaurants, small shuttles to Truro from surrounding towns, all of the above)

12. What concerns, if any, do you have about using public transit? (Select all that apply)

- Limited-service hours **(622, 21%)**
- Lack of routes near my home/work **(721, 24%)**
- Cost of fares **(464, 15%)**
- Accessibility concerns **(174, 6%)**
- Safety/security concerns **(288, 10%)**
- Reliability/on-time performance **(534, 18%)**
- No concerns **(195, 6%)**
- Other? (20, <1%, current infrastructure not equipped for transit, road conditions)

13. What would encourage you to use public transit? (Select up to 2)

- Affordable fares (609, 25%)
- Convenient schedules (645, 27%)
- Convenient routes (654, 27%)
- Real-time tracking/an easy way to book rides (195, 8%)
- Comfortable and clean vehicles (10, <1%)
- Environmental benefits (reducing traffic, pollution) (191, 8%)
- I am not interested in utilizing public transit (59, 2%)
- Other? (28, 1%, evenings and weekend service, event service, all of the above)

## 2.3 Public Survey #2 – May 1-22, 2025

The public survey was open from May 1-22, 2025. During that time, there were 599 responses.

Key takeaways from the survey include:

- Majority of respondents require travel **between the hours of 7AM-9PM** although there is a considerable number of those who need to travel **before 7AM and after 9PM**.
- The top three benefits of a potential regional transit service were identified as support for people without a car, lower transportation costs for families, and better access to healthcare and services.
- Respondents were largely in favor of a **stop-to-stop transit service on a fixed route** over a door-to-door transit service.
- A slight majority of respondents chose **fewer routes with more frequent service** over more routes with less frequent service.
- Respondents were almost **equally divided** in preferring **service, focusing on rush hours** with less frequent service throughout the rest of the day, and **consistent service throughout the day** with no increased service during rush hours.
- There was a near equal division in respondents choosing more frequent service on weekdays but no weekend service, and weekend service but less frequent service on the weekdays.
- Respondents largely preferred either a fixed-route system with set stops and times or a mixture of both fixed-route and on-demand systems throughout the region.
- Over half of respondents preferred the choice of **fewer daily departures, but consistent every day** (including weekends).
- When asked what approach is best if service can't be provided to every community, most respondents thought **focusing on the most used corridors or servicing areas with the highest transportation need (e.g. senior, low-income)** would be the better approach.
- It is clear that this mandate is **largely supported by the public**, and the benefits of introducing a regional transit service are clear. Concerns regarding the **active transportation infrastructure** were echoed as a need in the region, as well as **weekend service**. The **limited transportation options** in the region have led to **isolation** amongst underrepresented groups and the **addition of a public transit service** is widely viewed as a **positive step** in improving the mental and physical health of residents, specifically with the **addition of evening and weekend** transportation options.

1. What is your age group?
  - a. Under 18 (**9, 2%**)
  - b. 18-24 (47, 8%)
  - c. 25-34 (137, 23%)
  - d. 35-44 (134, 22%)
  - e. 45-54 (108, 18%)
  - f. 55-64 (81, 14%)
  - g. 65-74 (60, 10%)
  - h. 75+ (19, 3%)
  - i. Prefer not to say (**4, <1%**)
  
2. What is your current employment status?
  - a. Employed full-time (30+ hours per week) (**351, 59%**)
  - b. Employed part-time (Less than 30 hours per week) (**61, 10%**)
  - c. Self-employed/ Freelance (**27, 5%**)
  - d. Unemployed (**11, 1%**)
  - e. Student (**18, 3%**)
  - f. Retired (88, 15%)
  - g. Stay-at-home parent (**16, 3%**)
  - h. Unable to work/disabled (**21, 4%**)
  - i. Prefer not to say (**6, <1%**)
  
3. Where are you typically travelling from? (Postal Code, or blank if you prefer not to say)

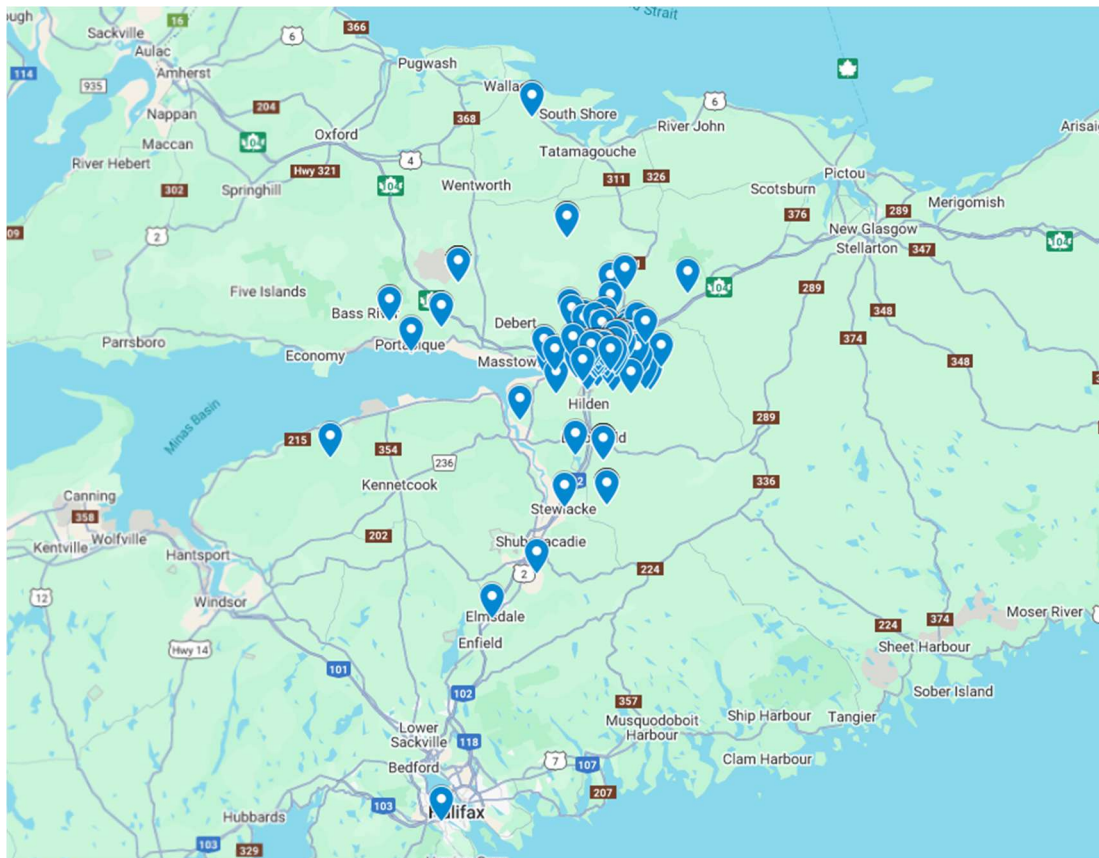


Figure 2: Distribution of the 378 responses from Question 3

4. What gender do you identify with?
  - a. Woman (419, 70%)

- b. Man (157, 26%)
  - c. Non-binary/non-conforming (**13, 2%**)
  - d. Prefer not to say (**10, 2%**)
  - e. Other? (**0, 0%**)
5. Do you identify with any of the following groups? (Select all that apply)
- Indigenous Peoples (**19, 3%**)
  - Racial or ethnic minority (**37, 5%**)
  - LGBTQ+ (70, 9%)
  - Person with a disability (**101, 14%**)
  - Low income (**141, 19%**)
  - Unhoused or experiencing housing instability (**10, 1%**)
  - Previously incarcerated (**2, <1%**)
  - Prefer not to say (**36, 5%**)
  - I do not identify with any of the groups (**310, 42%**)
  - Other? (13, 2%, other nationalities, specific disabilities, supporting child with a disability, etc.)

#### Determining Priorities and Preferences

6. What times of day do you typically need to travel? (Select all that apply)
- Early morning (before 7AM) (**143, 10%**)
  - AM rush (7-9AM) (**360, 25%**)
  - Midday (9AM-4PM) (**298, 21%**)
  - PM rush (4-6PM) (**309, 22%**)
  - Evening (6-9PM) (**237, 17%**)
  - Night (after 9PM) (**80, 6%**)
7. What benefits do you think a regional transit service would bring to Colchester County? (Select your top 3, or less)
- Better access to healthcare and services (**363, 22%**)
  - Support for people without a car (**510, 31%**)
  - Lower transportation costs for families (**373, 22%**)
  - Reduced environmental impact (**196, 12%**)
  - Strengthened local economy and workforce (**194, 12%**)
  - None (5, <1%)
  - Not sure (**3, <1%**)
  - Other? Please specify. (16, 1%, reduce congestion, safe transportation options, options for seniors with medical and accessibility needs, etc.)

Questions 8-11 include high-level trade-offs, please select your preferred response for each.

8. Which option best describes your preference?
- a. Door-to-door transit service, even if it means longer wait times and travel times (**79, 13%**)
  - b. Stop-to-stop transit service on a fixed route, even if it means longer walking distances to the bus stop (**520, 87%**)
9. Which option best describes your preference?
- a. Fewer routes with more frequent service (**373, 62%**)

- b. More routes with less frequent service **(226, 38%)**
- 10. Which option best describes your preference?
  - a. Service focused on “rush hours” (7:00 to 9:00 a.m.; 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.), but less frequent service at other times **(310, 52%)**
  - b. Service throughout the day, but less frequent service during “rush hours” **(289, 48%)**
- 11. Which option best describes your preference?
  - a. More frequent service on weekdays, but no service on weekends **(291, 49%)**
  - b. Weekend service, but less frequent service on weekdays **(308, 51%)**

Questions 12-14 provide a more in-depth look at possible trade-offs, please select your preferred response for each.

- 12. Would you prefer:
  - a. A fixed-route system with set stops and times **(331, 55%)**
  - b. A flexible or on-demand system (booking a ride within a service area) **(13, 2%)**
  - c. A mixture of both (on-demand in some areas, fixed-route in other areas) **(230, 39%)**
  - d. I don't have a preference **(25, 4%)**
- 13. If you had to choose, which transit schedule would you prefer?
  - a. Fewer daily departures, but consistent every day (e.g., same schedule weekdays/weekends) **(331, 55%)**
  - b. More frequent service on weekdays only **(128, 21%)**
  - c. Peak hours only (AM and PM rush) **(30, 5%)**
  - d. Weekend-only service for errands/recreation **(4, 1%)**
  - e. I don't have a preference **(105, 18%)**
- 14. If service can't be provided to every community, which approach do you think is best?
  - a. Serve the most populated communities first **(114, 19%)**
  - b. Serve areas with the highest transportation need (e.g., seniors, low-income) **(191, 32%)**
  - c. Rotate service between communities on different days **(58, 10%)**
  - d. Focus on the most used corridors, with options to connect from smaller areas **(207, 35%)**
  - e. I don't have a preference **(28, 5%)**
- 15. Do you have any additional thoughts, concerns, or suggestions about the Regional Transit Study that you'd like to share? **(147 responses)**

Most responses highlighted the need for additional public transit options and the importance of being able to commute to work and social events for all ages and abilities. Connections to active transportation (bikes, walking paths) were identified as a priority as well as introducing carpool lots for smaller communities. Concerns regarding current infrastructure and its ability to support a bus type service were raised. Respondents echoed the need for weekday and weekend service, noting that there currently are no options for those with accessibility issues on the weekends. Priority destinations such as hospitals, grocery stores, and employment hubs were identified.

## 2.4 Interviews – April 22- June 11, 2025

Stakeholder interviews were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the needs of various groups in the region and identify the current challenges and potential opportunities that could arise from additional transportation options. Representatives from the following groups participated in the interviews:

- African Nova Scotian Affairs
- Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce
- North Shore Business Development Group
- Public Health Northern Transportation Support Group
- NSCC Truro Campus
- United Way
- YMCA Immigrant Services
- Lemonaid Stand Society
- STEPS on Arthur
- Colchester Transportation Cooperative Ltd (CTCL)

### Key Takeaways:

#### Infrastructure and Accessibility Barriers

- There is only one accessible taxi service that operates in the region, which is often unavailable due to maintenance and does not provide reliable service evenings and weekends.
- Transitioning from a cane/walker to a wheelchair significantly reduces mobility options.
- Poor sidewalk conditions, inadequate crosswalks, and lack of curb cuts create hazards.
- Accessibility gaps were identified when accessing businesses, limiting inclusivity.

#### Economic and Affordability Constraints

- Transportation costs can be restrictive, especially for low-income residents and newcomers.
- One-way taxi fares to essential services like grocery stores can exceed \$20.
- High vehicle costs and insurance rates further restrict mobility.
- Economic constraints limit access to jobs, healthcare, and social services.
- Existing Service Limitations
- CTCL requires bookings 3 days in advance and offers no evening/weekend service.
- Operational hours (5:30 AM-5:00 PM) restrict access to flexible job schedules and social activities.
- CTCL's current licensing and funding agreement prevents same-day bookings and expansion as funding is relatively fixed and not tied to inflation.
- CTCL was exploring expansion options prior to the introduction of this feasibility study to increase capacity due to demand.
- CTCL often has requests for travel outside of the county, limiting vehicle availability.
- Isolation due to transport limitations impacts mental health and overall health outcomes.
- Regional and Geographic Connectivity
- Dispersed population and distant employment hubs (e.g., Debert Business Park) limit access for those without a personal vehicle.
- Students and faculty at NSCC Truro and Dalhousie AC face long commutes with poor or no transit access, affecting educational retention and recruitment.
- Rural residents face long commutes and limited options without a personal vehicle.
- Healthcare Access
- Public Health pilot provides free, limited medical-only transport and operates through CTCL.

- Excludes social and employment-related travel.
- Limited options for emergencies outside of an ambulance or taxi which is costly.

#### Transportation as Social Infrastructure

- Viewed as critical to community wellbeing, not a luxury, and should be available 7 days a week.
- Lack of transport reduces independence and increases isolation.
- Heavy reliance on personal vehicles as most people travel by car due to limited public transit and inadequate infrastructure for walking or cycling.

#### Economic and Workforce Development

- Transit limitations hinder workforce mobility and business recruitment.
- Local economic growth suffers due to worker shortages and reduced customer access.
- Some employment opportunities aren't able to be considered by residents due to the limited transportation options.

### **Opportunities:**

#### Partnerships and Service Integration

- Formal collaboration between CTCL and municipal bodies could unlock new service models and funding opportunities.
- Adopt hybrid models combining fixed routes with demand-responsive service.
- Look to successful models in Antigonish and Pictou counties.

#### Economic Development and Employer Engagement

- Employers could subsidize worker transport to improve labor force access.
- Introduce student transit passes to support education and skills development.

#### Technology and Innovation

- Implement real-time tracking and mobile booking apps.
- Introduce integrated payment systems (e.g., reloadable transit cards).
- Security systems (cameras, alarms, etc.)

#### Accessibility Leadership

- Make all new vehicles fully accessible with trained staff.
- Improve sidewalks, shelters, and curb cuts to support inclusive mobility.
- Adopt Bridgewater's model of building-front drop-offs.

### **Service Design Considerations:**

#### Route Planning

- Focus on key destinations: hospitals, malls, employment hubs, schools, and recreation centers.
- Event-based transport for major festivals and gatherings.
- Service offerings to continue into the evening and weekend especially for social and community events

#### Vehicle and Infrastructure Considerations

- Use smaller, fully accessible vehicles for narrow streets.
- Offer hybrid models (fixed route plus on-demand, last-leg solutions, park-and-ride lots).
- Prioritize infrastructure that enhances walkability and shelter from the elements while waiting.

- Transition to electric/hybrid vehicles to reduce emissions.
- Promote active transport options (bike racks, park-and-ride lots).

#### Community and Social Innovation

- Consider "pay what you can" or subsidized rates for implementation
- Engage volunteers and develop training-to-employment pathways for drivers.

#### Anticipated Community Benefits:

##### Social Inclusion

- Additional transportation options can enhance independence and quality of life, especially for isolated groups.
- Increased participation in community events.
- Reduces dependence on informal supports such as rides from family/friends.

##### Economic Growth

- Expands labor market access.
- Strengthens local businesses through increased customer reach.
- Reliable transportation is known to increase employee retention.

##### Health and Well-being

- Supports mental health by reducing isolation.
- Enables better nutrition and access to healthcare.
- Increased access to recreational facilities and activities.

##### Environmental Sustainability

- Reduces single-occupancy vehicle use and emissions.
- Encourages multi-modal transport.

#### Summary

Through the interviews conducted, it is clear that residents face **critical transportation challenges** that limit **accessibility, mobility, and overall well-being**. This is especially true for low-income residents, newcomers, people with disabilities, rural populations, and students. Current transportation options are very **limited in the evenings and weekends**, contributing to **social isolation** for those without access to a personal vehicle or disposable income for a taxi, where available. Stakeholders have praised CTCL for bridging a transportation gap for residents over the last 25 years but noted that even they are **limited to advanced booking due** to funding constraints and are **unable to meet the current demand** with the resources they have available.

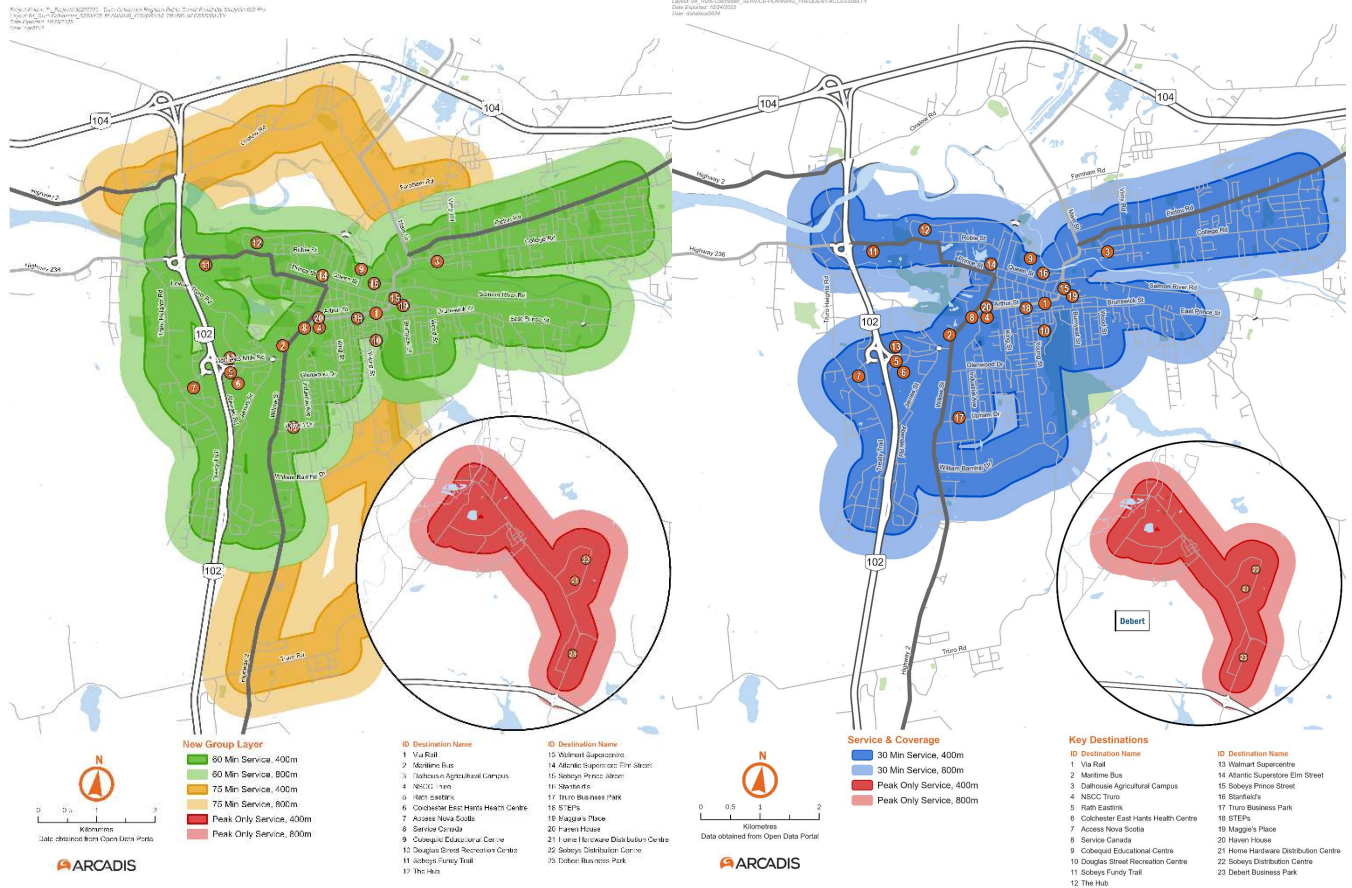
Stakeholders overwhelmingly view transportation as a form of **social infrastructure** that should be **accessible both financially and physically**. Strategic opportunities include **integrated partnerships** between CTCL and municipalities, **hybrid service models** that incorporate both fixed-route and on-demand services, and **additional features** such as real-time tracking, bike racks for active transportation connections, carpool lots, and more. Emphasis is placed **on accessibility, climate-friendly options, and inclusive route planning**. **Priority destinations** were identified as hospitals, malls, employment hubs, schools, and recreation centers. Through a thoughtful design and public support, expanded transportation services could significantly **improve economic development, reduce social isolation, support educational outcomes, and promote environmental sustainability**.

## 2.5 Pop-Up Events and Supporting Survey - October 25<sup>th</sup> to November 14<sup>th</sup>

As the final phase of public engagement for the Colchester Regional Transit Feasibility Study, Colliers hosted two in-person pop-up events on October 25, 2025, at Walmart and Atlantic Superstore in Truro, directly engaging residents on the proposed transit service concepts. This phase of engagement focused on validating key service design trade-offs, including coverage versus frequency, stop spacing, service hours, and priority destinations, building on the findings from the earlier public surveys and stakeholder engagement. Following the pop-up events, the same survey was advertised and administered by the Town of Truro and the Municipality of Colchester, remaining open until November 14, 2025. This allowed residents who were unable to attend in person to provide feedback on the same set of questions. Feedback collected through this combined in-person and online approach was used to confirm community preferences, assess public support for the proposed network concepts, and inform final recommendations.

Key objectives of this engagement phase included confirming public preferences on service trade-offs, validating priority destinations and access expectations, and testing overall support for the proposed transit concepts prior to finalizing recommendations. The responses to the pop-up event questions are summarized below, along with any key findings that were identified. The responses highlighted community preferences related to service design, access, and overall support for the proposed transit concepts. Questions were based on the provided coverage-focused and frequency-focused service maps shown in Figure 3.

# Colchester Regional Transit Feasibility Study – Impact Analysis Report



1. On a scale of 1 – 5, how likely is the larger coverage area option to meet your transportation needs? 1 indicates that it would meet none of your requirements, and 5 would indicate it meets all requirements.

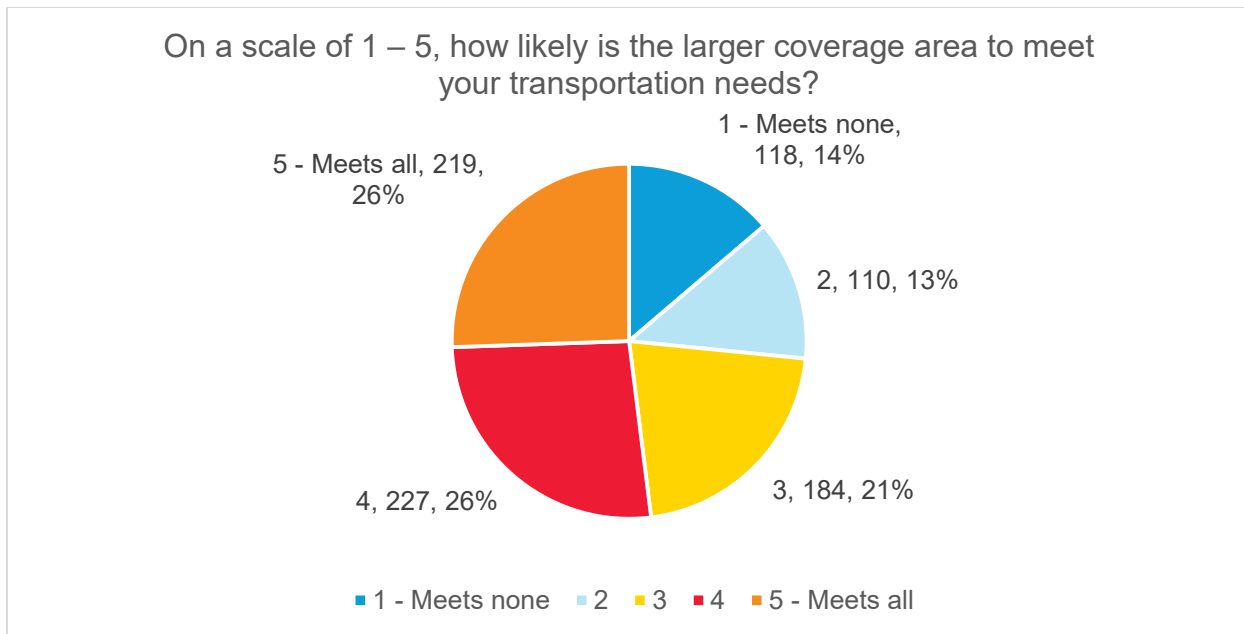


Figure 4- How likely is the larger coverage area to meet your transportation needs?

2. What do you like about the larger coverage area option?

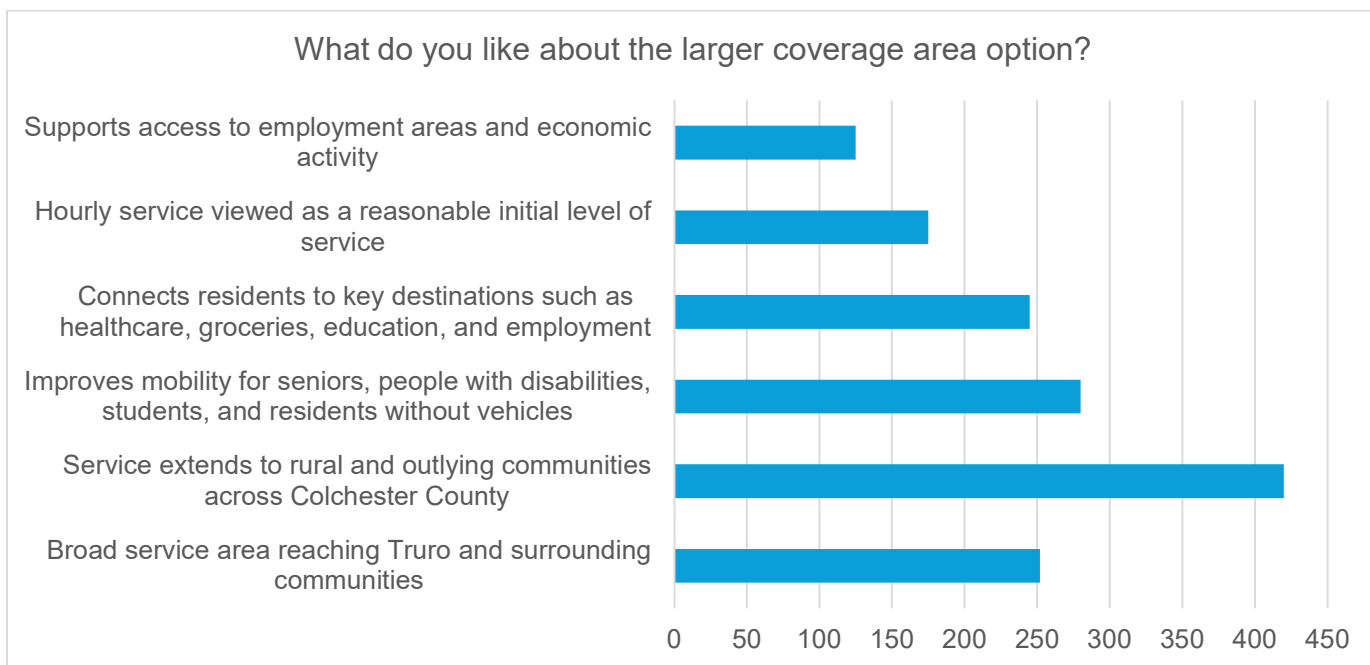


Figure 5- What do you like about the larger coverage area option?

3. What do you dislike about the larger coverage area option?

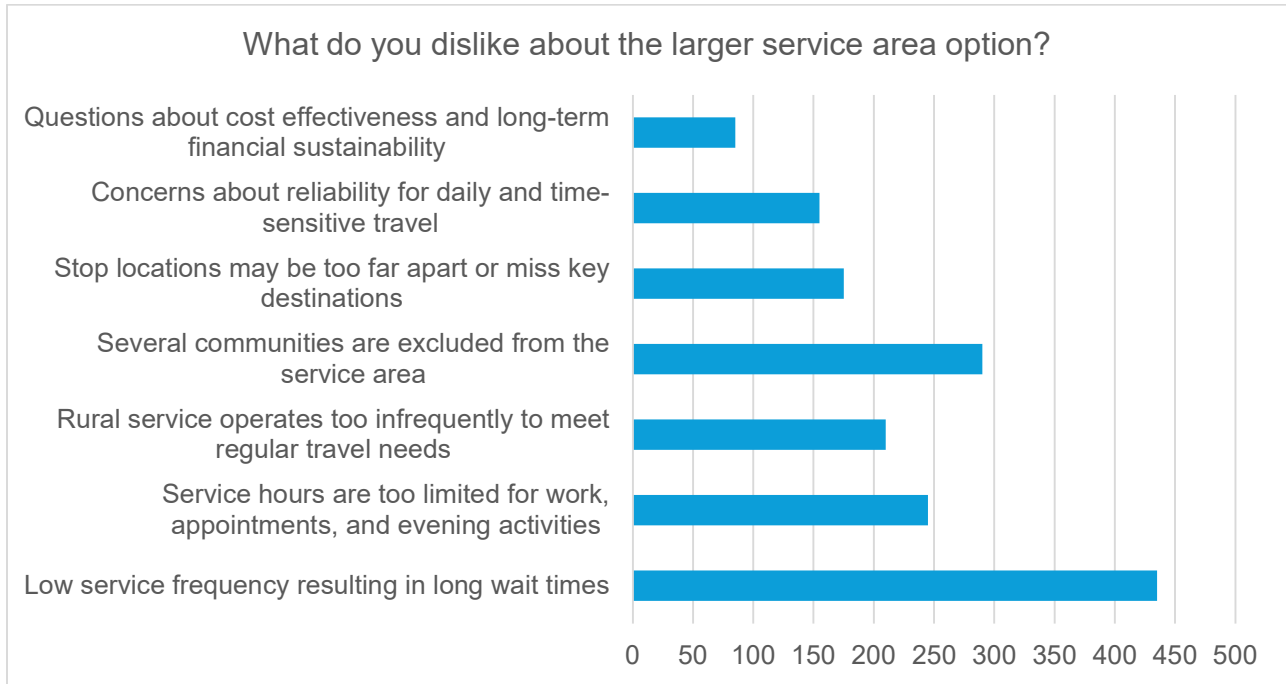


Figure 6- What do you dislike about the larger service area option?

4. On a scale of 1 – 5, how likely is the more frequent service option to meet your transportation needs? 1 indicates that it would meet none of your requirements, and 5 would indicate it meets all requirements.

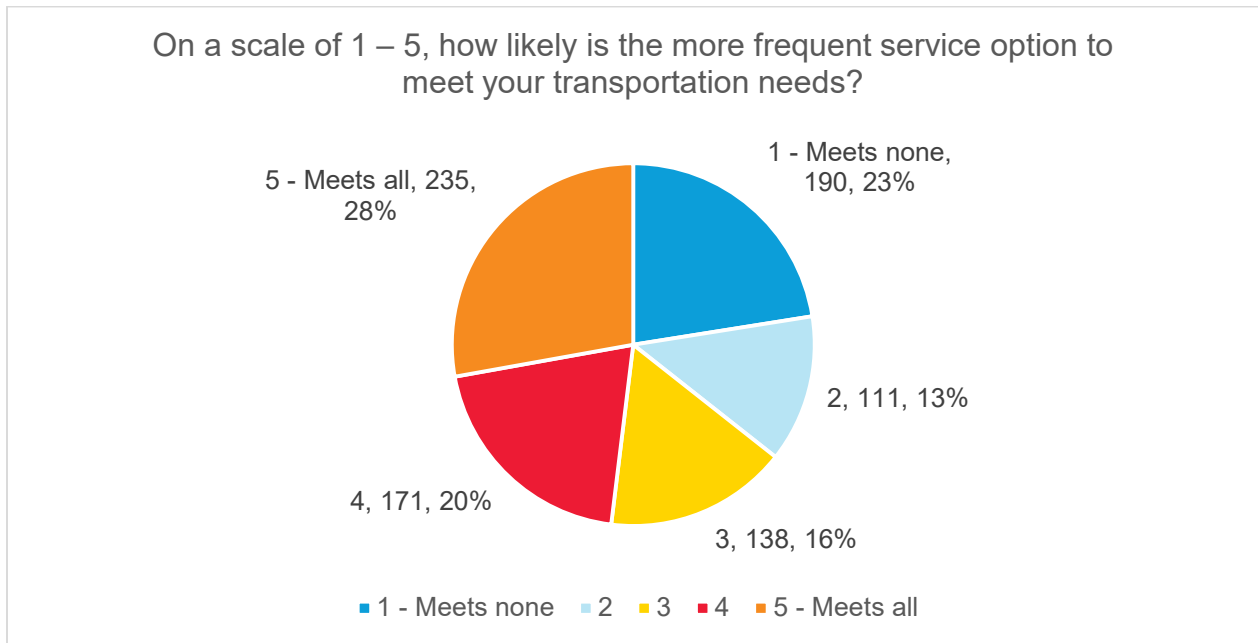


Figure 7- How likely is the more frequent service option to meet your transportation needs?

5. What do you like about the more frequent service option?

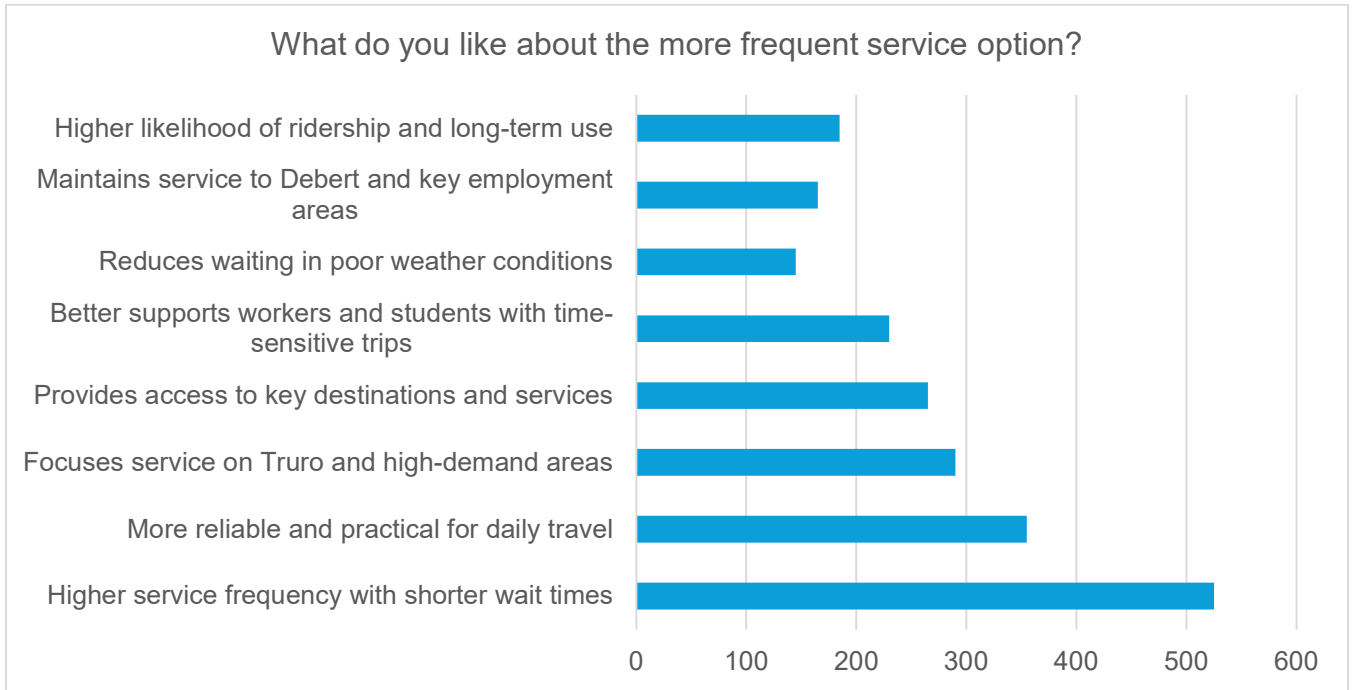


Figure 8- What do you like about the more frequent service option?

6. What do you dislike about the more frequent service option?

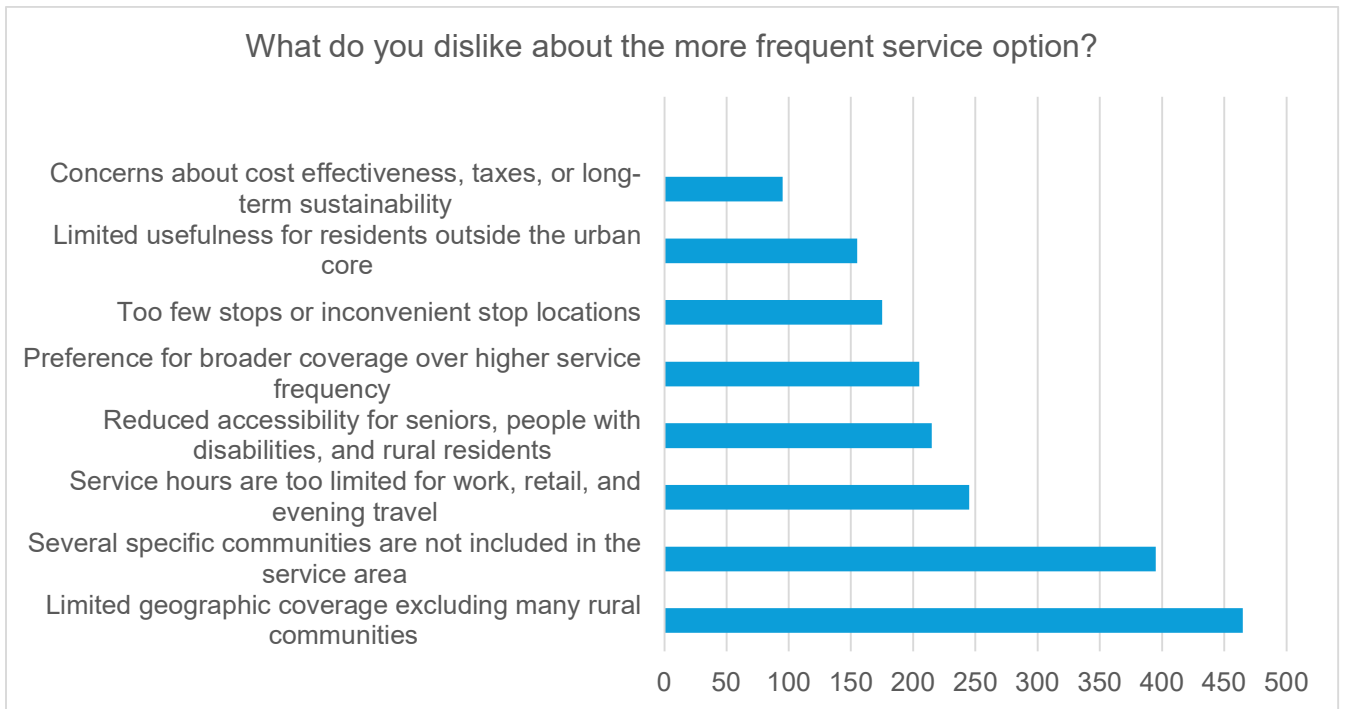


Figure 9- What do you dislike about the more frequent service option?

7. Based on these two concepts, which do you prefer?

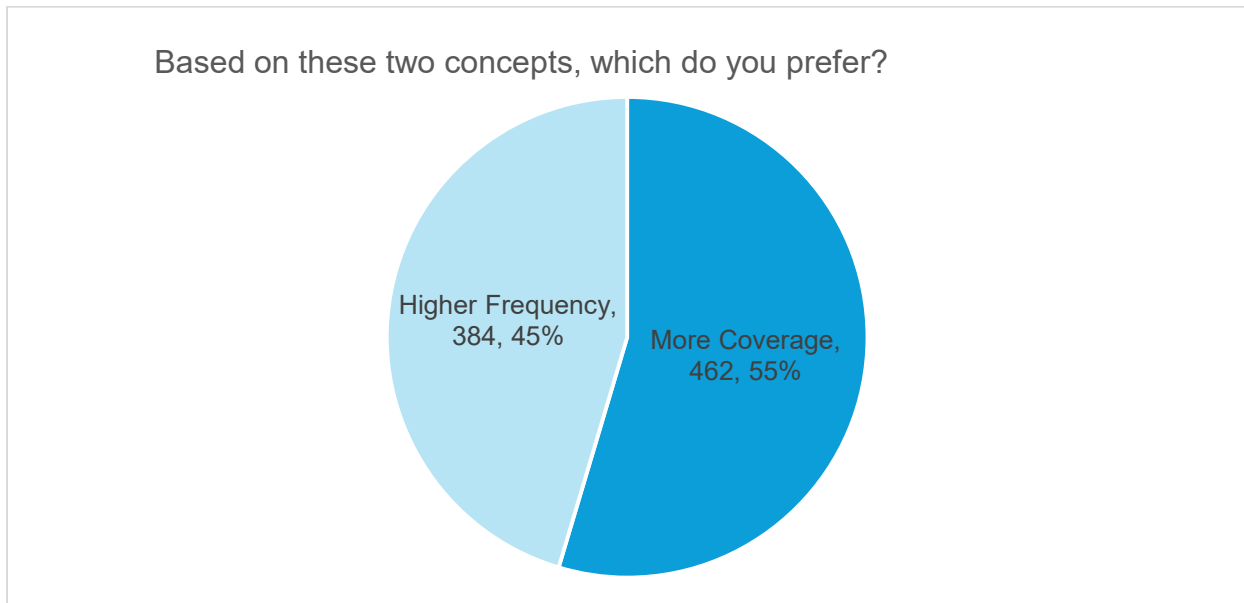
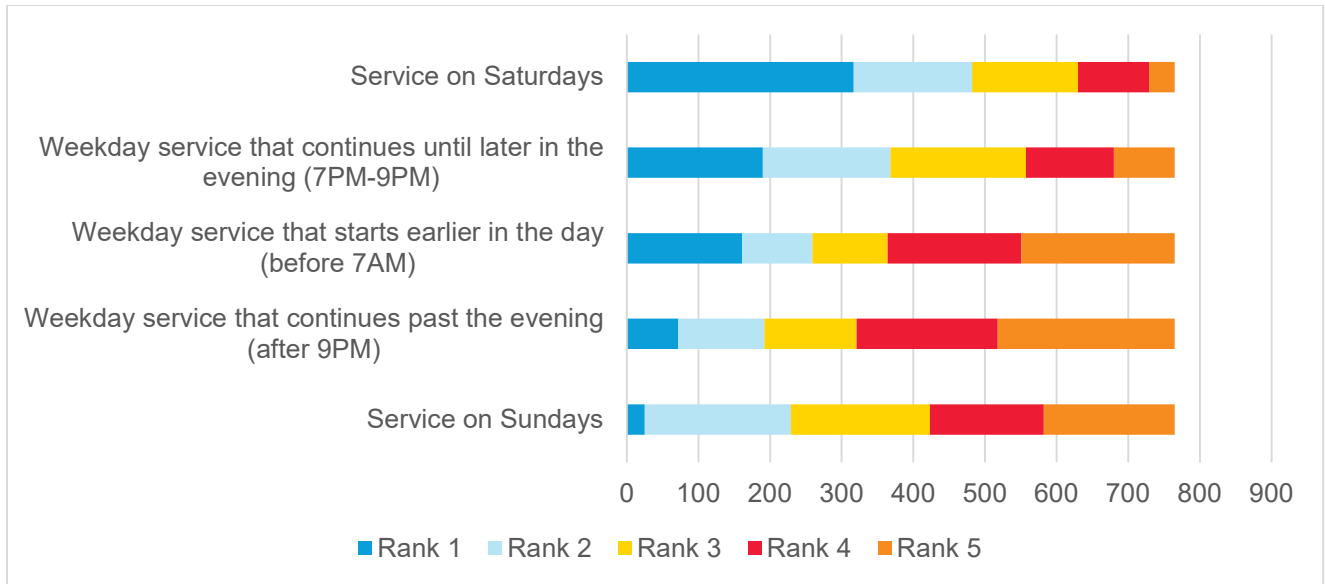


Figure 10- Preferred Concept, Coverage vs Frequency

8. Transit service is commonly provided on weekdays during “rush hour” and mid-day periods (i.e. 7 AM to 6 PM). Beyond weekday rush hour/mid-day service, rank your preference for transit service (from most important to least important):

Option	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5
Service on Saturdays	317	165	148	99	36
Weekday service that continues until later in the evening (7 PM-9 PM)	190	178	189	123	85
Weekday service that starts earlier in the day (before 7 AM)	161	98	105	187	214
Weekday service that continues past the evening (after 9 PM)	72	120	129	197	247
Service on Sundays	25	204	194	159	183



**Figure 11- Ranked Preferred Transit Service Times**

There are several ways to interpret ranked-choice responses. One common approach is to assess whether one option *dominates* another by comparing the cumulative number of responses at each ranking level. An option is considered to dominate another if it has more responses at Rank 1 and continues to have more responses when Rank 1 and Rank 2 are combined, and so on through all ranks. Based on this approach, expanded transit service on Saturdays consistently receives the highest number of responses at every ranking level, making it the dominant option. Similarly, extending weekday service from 7 PM to 9 PM dominates all remaining options except Saturdays. The other service time options do not clearly dominate one another, as their rankings vary depending on whether emphasis is placed on higher-priority ranks or lower-priority ranks. While alternative ranking methods, such as applying a numerical weighting to ranks, could be used to produce a single overall score, doing so would not change the relative ordering of Saturday service and weekday service from 7 PM to 9 PM, which consistently emerge as the highest-priority preferences.

9. If you were to take a bus from your primary residence, where are you leaving from, and what are the top 3 destinations you would like to reach?

Please see Figure 12- Top Transit Service Destinations - Rural Map, Figure 13- Top Transit Service Destinations - Urban Map, and Figure 14- Top Transit Service Destinations - Heat Map for a graphical representation of the most common destinations.

# Colchester Regional Transit Feasibility Study – Impact Analysis Report

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 Layout: 09\_Trivo-Colchester\_DamaraSurvey-RURAL  
 Date Exported: 11/26/2025  
 User: ngs3916



Figure 12- Top Transit Service Destinations - Rural Map

# Colchester Regional Transit Feasibility Study – Impact Analysis Report

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 User: ngs5816

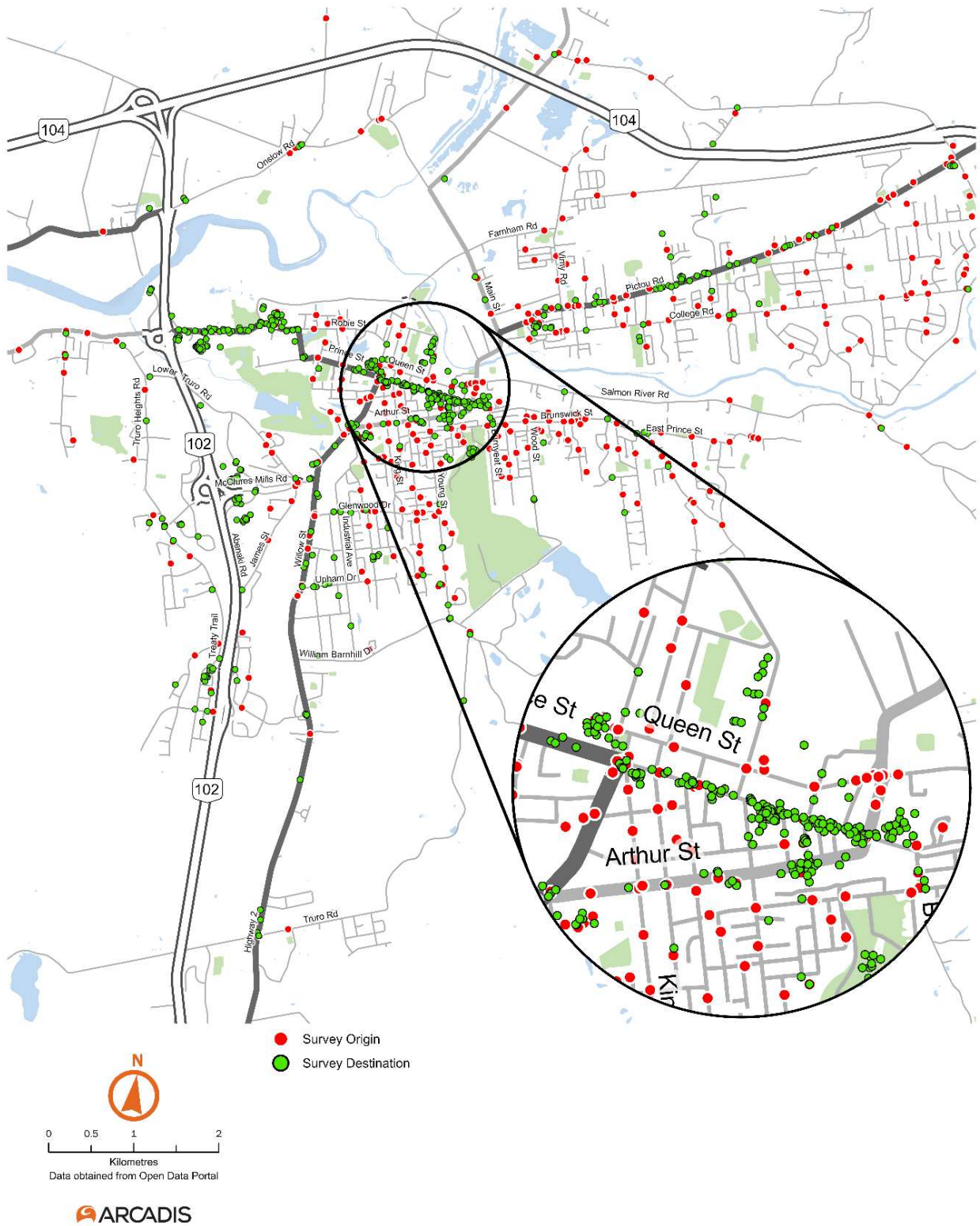


Figure 13- Top Transit Service Destinations - Urban Map

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 Date Exported: 11/26/2025  
 User: ngc6616



Figure 14- Top Transit Service Destinations - Heat Map

10. Do you have any questions or comments that you would like to share?

Table 1- Questions and Comments

Question or Comment	Count
There is broad support for introducing public transit in Colchester, often described as being long overdue or urgently needed.	285
Emphasis on affordability, including concern about taxi costs and the need for low fares, passes, or discounts.	205
Requests to ensure rural and outlying communities are included in the transit network.	225
Frequent and specific calls to include Valley in any transit service.	165
Desire for earlier morning and later evening service to support shift workers, students, and evening activities.	195
Comments indicate that shorter wait times are critical for making transit practical and usable.	175
Interest in combining elements of both concepts, such as frequent urban service with less frequent rural service.	145
Importance of serving employment locations, particularly Debert Industrial Park and other job centres.	155
Support for connections to hospitals, post-secondary institutions, grocery stores, and other essential destinations.	185
Focus on seniors, people with disabilities, low-income residents, youth, and residents without vehicles.	170
Requests for Saturday and Sunday service to support errands, work, recreation, and social activities.	135
Comments about stop spacing, shelter, seating, lighting, and safe pedestrian access.	120
Requests for clearer route maps, schedules, and easier-to-understand information.	110
Interest in real-time tracking, mobile payment, bike racks, and accessible vehicles.	95
Concerns about congestion, road width, safety, and infrastructure readiness.	90
Recognition of environmental benefits and potential reductions in car use and congestion.	85
Suggestions to launch transit as a pilot or phased program before full implementation.	80
Concerns related to safety on buses, at stops, and in the surrounding neighbourhoods.	70
Interest in connections to Maritime Bus, rail, airport shuttles, or regional services.	65

## 3.0 Transit Case Study Analysis

The purpose of the case study analysis was to identify and document possible transit solutions and lessons learned from communities with active public transit that are comparable to and could be implemented in the Town of Truro and Municipality of Colchester. The analysis looked to identify practical insights, highlight challenges and successes from similar municipalities, and identify lessons that can be adapted to Colchester's unique local and regional circumstances.

Three Nova Scotia municipalities have been selected for the case study: the Town of Bridgewater, Pictou County, and Kings County. The municipalities were selected based on the following criteria:

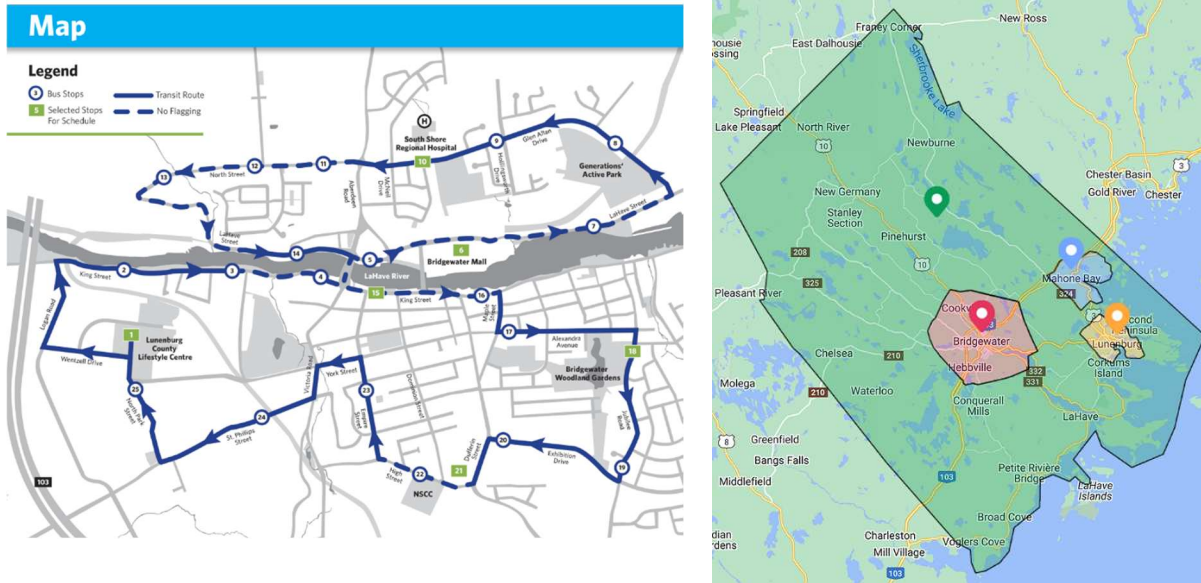
- Population.
- Geographic structure.
- Location.
- Transit model regional coordination.
- Service model type (fixed-route, on-demand, hybrid).
- Availability of operational and survey data.

The case study analysis was intended to learn as much about the transit model, implementation, and lessons learned to assist Colchester through its implementation process. The analysis was conducted in three steps:

1. Research- Collected and reviewed all available information on the transit authorities.
2. Transit Needs Assessment Survey- Developed a list of questions to summarize lessons learned and customer satisfaction in each community.
3. Document Lessons Learned- Summarized the results into the Impact Analysis Report.

To ensure that the case study included a diverse selection of transit models, the analysis was conducted on three municipalities. The questions from the lessons learned survey can be found in Appendix 1. The results of the research and survey results of each of the communities can be found in the following sections.

### 3.1 Town of Bridgewater, Nova Scotia



#### 3.1.1 Bridgewater Transit Details

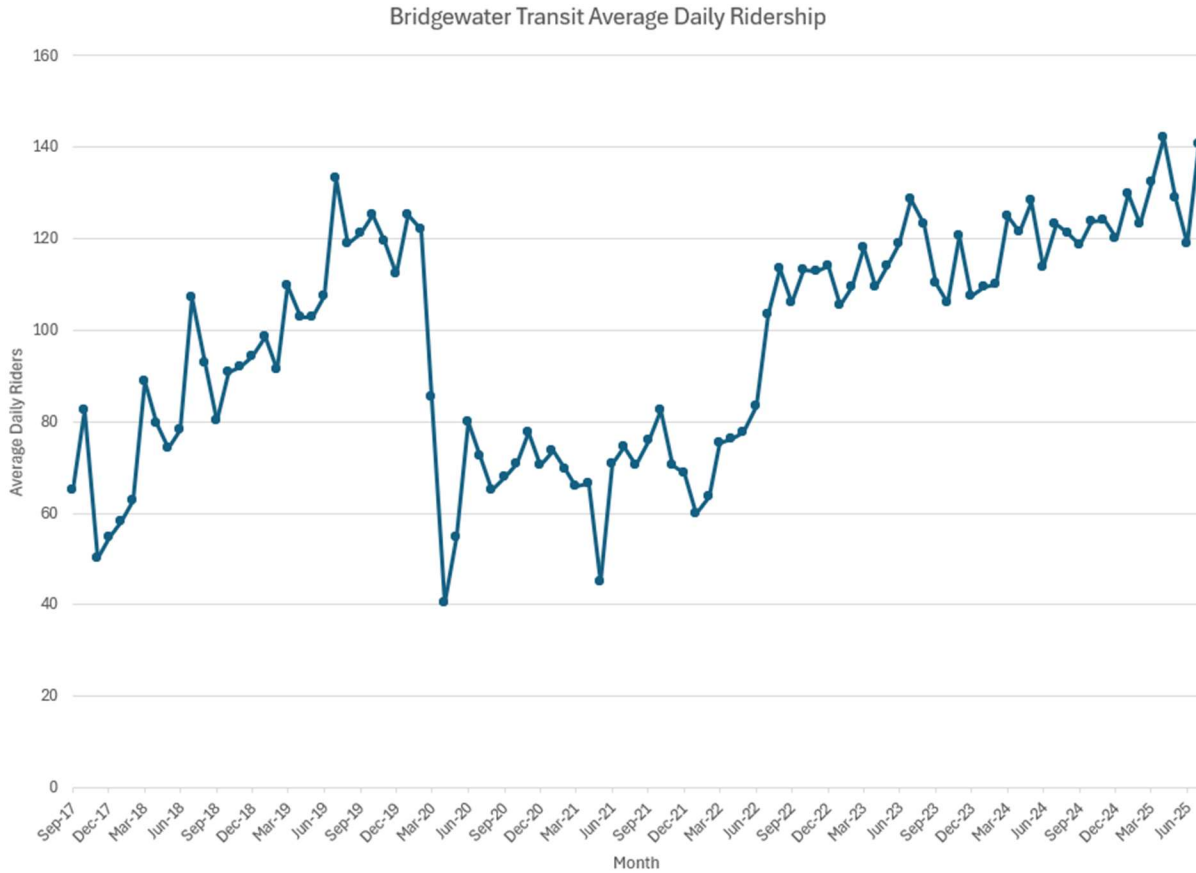
<b>Town Population:</b> 9,000	<b>Transit Authority:</b> Bridgewater Transit, Lunenburg County Wheels
<b>Regional Population:</b> 60,000	<b>Town Transit Type:</b> Flag Stop Fixed Route
<b>Transit Contact:</b> Jim Coleman, Jim.Coleman@bridgewater.ca	<b>Regional Transit Type:</b> On-Demand
<b>Fares:</b> <b>Single:</b> \$2.00, \$1.50 Student/ Youth <b>10 Rides:</b> \$18.00, \$13.50 Student/ Youth <b>Monthly:</b> \$45.00, \$30.00 Student/ Youth <b>Family:</b> \$4.00/ ride up to 5 people <b>On Demand:</b> Based on distance	<b>Fixed Route Schedule:</b> Hour-long route, once per hour
	<b>Provided Info:</b> Bridgewater Transit Pilot Evaluation Report, Fixed Route Transit Service Expansion Pilot Study, Lessons Learned Survey

#### 3.1.2 Transit Offerings

The Town of Bridgewater offers two complementary transit services that address the mobility needs of residents within the town and across Lunenburg County. Within Bridgewater itself, the Town operates a flag-stop fixed route service that runs on a one-hour loop, seven days a week. Riders can board and depart at designated stops or by flagging the bus along much of the route, with service hours spanning weekdays from 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., Saturdays from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., and Sundays from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The system is accessible, with low-floor buses, wheelchair spaces, and bicycle racks, and offers \$2.00 flat fares with discounts for buying bulk passes, monthly passes and offers student/family rates.

Bridgewater Transit provided their ridership data from September 2017 to July 2025, shown in Figure 15 below. Their service has seen a steady increase in ridership since starting in 2017. They averaged 63 riders per day in 2017. Ridership has increased to an average of 131 riders per day in 2025, up to July, or

an increase of 108%. Note that the drop in ridership from 2020 to 2023 was attributed to COVID-19 lockdowns.



**Figure 15 Bridgewater Transit Average Daily Ridership**

Usage patterns were strongest during weekday peaks, with trips most often associated with access to employment, medical appointments, and shopping. While overall numbers reflect the modest size of the community, the data demonstrates consistent demand and highlights how even small-scale systems can deliver meaningful mobility benefits. For Colchester, this evidence suggests that a well-structured transit option, even at a limited scale, can attract regular ridership and serve essential daily needs.

Beyond the town boundary, Lunenburg County Wheels offers a door-to-door on-demand service that provides accessible transportation across the county. This service accommodates those who live in rural or low-density areas not directly served by Bridgewater’s fixed route, and it plays an essential role in connecting people to medical appointments, shopping, education, and community programs. Pricing is fixed between and within the Towns in the County, and there is a pay-per-km fee structure for rural residents. Together, these two systems create a hybrid model that provides transit services to the entire region.

### 3.1.3 Lessons Learned

Feedback from riders in Bridgewater indicates strong support for having a local public transit option, with many emphasizing that it provides independence for youth, seniors, and residents without access to a vehicle. Riders noted the affordability of the flat fare system and appreciated the convenience of the flag

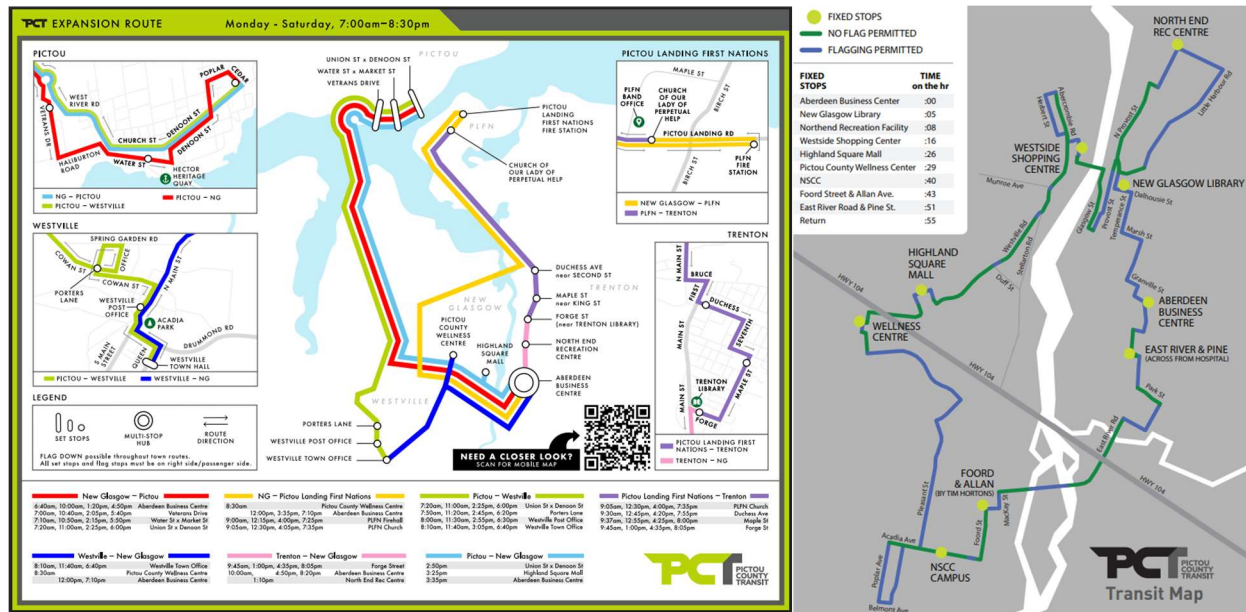
stop model, which allows them to complete errands, access recreation, attend medical appointments, and reach employment opportunities that might otherwise have been out of reach.

Conversely, Bridgewater indicated they have several challenges and opportunities for improvement in their current system. The hour-long, one-way loop was frequently described as too long, with buses not coming frequently enough. Riders also highlighted the need for improved stop infrastructure, including shelters, benches, and winter maintenance, to make the system more accessible and comfortable. Adding accessible stop infrastructure and adjusting routes to shorten travel times while expanding access to high-demand commercial areas were identified as the biggest opportunities for improvement. This highlights the constant balance between coverage, frequency and cost that a transit authority needs to navigate.

Other suggested improvements specific to Bridgewater included improving coverage to areas such as seniors' complexes and other major commercial areas, which are currently being left underserved. Limited communication and the lack of posted schedules were noted as barriers for casual riders, while some non-users questioned the appropriateness of the bus size and cost for a community of Bridgewater's scale.

From these experiences, several lessons emerge that may be relevant to Colchester. A flag-stop fixed route can succeed in small urban centres when it balances coverage and efficiency, but early and ongoing engagement is essential to refine routes, schedules, and fare structures. Investments in stop amenities and clear rider information significantly improve the user experience and encourage growth in ridership. Finally, integration with regional on-demand services, such as Lunenburg County Wheels, strengthens overall accessibility and provides a model of coordination between urban and rural service delivery.

### 3.2 Pictou County, NS



### 3.2.1 Pictou County Transit Details

<b>Town Population:</b> 3,200	<b>Transit Authority:</b> Pictou County Transit, CHAD Transit
Regional Population: 43,000	<b>Town Transit Type:</b> Fixed Flag Stop Route
<b>Transit Contact:</b> Marg MacIntosh, Marg@CHADTransit.ca (PCT and CHAD)	<b>Regional Transit Type:</b> Expansion Fixed-Route, On Demand
<b>Fares:</b> <b>Town Single Ride:</b> \$3.00 <b>Town Day Pass:</b> \$7.50 <b>Expansion Day:</b> \$5.00 <b>Monthly Pass:</b> \$70.00, \$60.00 Senior/Student, \$40.00 Youth <b>On Demand:</b> Based on distance	<b>Fixed Route Schedule:</b> Hour-long route, once per hour  <b>Provided Info:</b> Fixed Route Transit Service Expansion Pilot Study, Lessons Learned Survey

### 3.2.2 Transit Offerings

Pictou County Transit operates a flag-stop fixed-route system that serves the towns of Stellarton and New Glasgow, running on an hour-long loop with a flat fare of \$3.00 for a single trip or \$5.00 for a day pass. This route provides predictable coverage across key destinations and has been a foundation for mobility within the county. With an hour-long route, the bus is scheduled to arrive at any stop location at the same time on the hour every hour, making it easy to navigate for new users.

In 2024, Pictou County introduced an expansion route to connect additional communities beyond the core service area. While this initiative demonstrated a clear demand for regional connectivity, it has struggled to achieve projected ridership, with engagement showing that many residents were unaware of the service or how to access it. Nevertheless, the expansion route reflects ongoing efforts to broaden mobility options across the region and importantly, ridership has been increasing.

All Pictou County Transit vehicles are fully accessible, equipped with low floors and wheelchair ramps, ensuring mobility for residents with disabilities and seniors. Service hours are structured to support both commuting and daily trips, with operations focused on weekdays to connect residents to work, shopping, and appointments.

Complementing these fixed-route services, CHAD Transit provides a door-to-door on-demand service across Pictou County. This service is particularly valuable for residents in rural or lower-density areas or those requiring accessibility services. Together, Pictou County Transit and CHAD Transit form a hybrid model of mobility that balances the consistency of scheduled fixed routes with the flexibility of on-demand transportation, offering lessons in how urban and rural service delivery can be coordinated.

### 3.2.3 Lessons Learned

The Pictou County Fixed Route Transit Service Expansion Pilot Study indicated that feedback from riders in Pictou County indicates strong support for having a reliable and affordable local public transit option. The \$3.00 single fare and \$5.00 day pass were generally highlighted as affordable options, particularly for individuals making multiple trips in a day. Similar to other rural systems, the fixed flag-stop route enabled access to essential services, employment, education, and shopping, while also offering flexibility for spontaneous travel.

However, riders identified several barriers to regular use. Respondents frequently mentioned that buses did not come often enough, that trips could be lengthy or indirect, and that stops were sometimes too far from destinations. Limited-service hours and gaps in geographic coverage were also cited as significant

challenges. These findings suggest that while the service provides an important foundation, frequency and convenience remain limiting factors for attracting and retaining riders.

In terms of improvements, residents expressed a desire for more frequent service, better route design to reduce travel times, and increased stop accessibility. Extended service hours, particularly for evenings and weekends, were also identified as priorities. Investments in comfort and safety, including shelters and benches, along with clearer rider information and communication, were highlighted as necessary to make the system more attractive to both existing and potential users. Introducing technology such as real-time bus tracking or the ability to plan trips with Google Maps would be helpful in using the service.

### 3.3 Kings County, NS



#### 3.3.1 Kings Transit Details

<b>Town Population:</b> 26,929 (Kentville Metropolitan Area)	<b>Transit Authority:</b> Kings Transit
<b>Regional Population:</b> 62,914 (Kings County)	<b>Town Transit Type:</b> Fixed-Route
<b>Transit Contact:</b> Meg Hodges, info@kingstransit.ns.ca	<b>Regional Transit Type:</b> Fixed-Route
<b>Fares:</b> <b>Single Fare:</b> \$4.00, \$2.25 Student/ Youth/ Senior <b>10 Ride Pass:</b> \$35.00, \$20.00 Student/ Senior <b>Monthly Pass:</b> \$90.00, \$65.00 Student/ Senior	<b>Route Schedule:</b> One to two hours one-way, bus leaving every hour  <b>Provided Info:</b> Rider Survey, Strategic Plan

#### 3.3.2 Transit Offerings

Kings Transit Authority (KTA) operates an extensive fixed-route bus system serving Kings, Annapolis, and Digby counties in Nova Scotia. The routes extend over a combined 150km, connecting Wolfville, Kentville, Berwick, Middleton, and Annapolis Royal, extending west to Cornwallis and Weymouth. It offers

five core routes which operate Monday through Saturday along Highway 1. Routes overlap to provide continuity between towns and improve efficiency in areas with overlapping demand.

The transit network operates exclusively as a regional service with routes travelling in both directions along Highway 1. Each route generally takes between 1 to 2 hours in one direction before the bus turns around and travels along the same route in the opposite direction. More populated sections, such as New Minas and Kentville, do offer more frequent service with limited coverage during peak hours.

All KTA buses are fully accessible, featuring low-floor designs, wheelchair ramps, and priority seating. The agency also offers an Attendant Card Program, which allows registered support persons to ride for free, thereby improving accessibility for riders with disabilities. KTA's fare system is standardized across all routes, with adult fares set at \$4.00 per trip and discounted rates for seniors, students, and children. The service also provides 10-ride passes and monthly options to encourage regular ridership.

Kings Transit issued a public survey in October 2023 to gather ridership data. The results indicate that 36% of respondents currently use Kings Transit, with approximately 26% of transit users reporting daily use of the system, and another 33% using it on a weekly basis. Riders primarily use the service for employment, healthcare, and education, predominantly among lower-income and non-driving populations aged 40 to 64. This demographic comprises a mix of working adults and older residents who rely on transit as their primary mode of transportation. Routes 1 and 2, operating exclusively in Kings County, account for almost half of their ridership. Of the respondents to the public survey issued by Kings Transit in 2023,

The system is municipally governed, with operational funding shared between the participating counties and towns. This partnership model has enabled Kings Transit to sustain its operations since its establishment in the late 1980s, although long-term financial sustainability remains dependent on consistent municipal support. In recent years, Kings Transit has adopted digital tracking through its Transloc system, allowing riders to view real-time bus locations and schedules.

### 3.3.3 Lessons Learned

Extensive feedback has been collected through multiple recent initiatives to revamp the Kings Transit System. The two-hour service frequency remains one of the most significant barriers to ridership growth. While this schedule is necessary to maintain cost control over a large geographic area, it limits convenience and competitiveness with private vehicles, particularly for commuters. Despite the authority operating since the 1980s, public awareness of available routes and schedules remains limited in some areas.

Additionally, the Transit authority purchased most of its fleet from Halifax Transit, which was retiring the buses near the end of their usable life. These aging diesel buses continue to increase maintenance costs and reduce service reliability. It was evident through public feedback that the transit system is not reliable, with frequent breakdowns, which affects public perception and is ultimately believed to be reducing ridership.

Results from the 2023 survey highlighted that the leading barriers for people who choose not to use Kings Transit include limited route coverage, infrequent service, and a lack of nearby stops. Approximately 42% of respondents indicated that the nearest stop is more than 1 km from their residence, while another 50% live between 500 m and 1 km from a stop. The distance to service access points was a major factor influencing ridership. Survey participants identified several priority improvements that would make them more likely to use Kings Transit:

- 75% requested expanded routes and service coverage.
- 68% emphasized increased frequency and reliability.
- 45% wanted real-time tracking and digital information tools.
- 21% recommended reduced fares or discounts for regular riders.

Additionally, 74% of respondents expressed interest in using on-demand transit to serve areas not currently covered by fixed routes, indicating strong support for hybrid service models.

Open-ended comments reflected appreciation for the affordability and essential role of Kings Transit, especially for residents without private vehicles. However, rider feedback highlights the importance of designing a transit system that strikes a balance between affordability, reliability, and convenience. The success of its fixed-route service highlights how regional connectivity can enhance access to employment, education, and healthcare, even in low-density areas. The growing interest in digital tools and electronic payment options also suggests that adopting modern technologies can significantly improve user experience and operational efficiency. These insights provide valuable guidance for Colchester as it develops scalable and inclusive transit solutions tailored to the community's needs.

## 3.4 Transit Impact Considerations

The case study analysis provided valuable insights not only into the operational aspects of small-urban transit systems but also into the broader impacts these systems have on the communities they serve. These impacts extend well beyond transit and can have far-reaching effects on social, economic, employment, housing, infrastructure, and the environment within the community.

These considerations are intended to help the Town of Truro and the Municipality of Colchester understand the potential benefits and challenges that may arise from implementing a transit system. While not exhaustive, they summarize key themes observed in the case study communities and outline how similar outcomes could apply in Colchester's context. The subsections that follow provide a detailed description of these impacts, highlighting potential benefits for residents, businesses, and the region. Ultimately, these impacts should be viewed alongside operational and financial feasibility to ensure that transit planning in Colchester balances community benefits with long-term sustainability and resource considerations.

### 3.4.1 Social Impacts

Transit systems play a significant role in supporting social equity, cohesion, and inclusion. Enhanced access to essential services such as healthcare, groceries, education, and social supports, is a well-documented benefit of public transit, particularly in rural and small-urban communities. Rural populations, in particular seniors, individuals with disabilities, students, and low-income residents, often face significant barriers when personal vehicle use is either unaffordable or unavailable, which directly impacts their overall quality of life and sense of belonging in community<sup>1</sup>. By providing affordable and reliable mobility options, transit ensures that all residents, regardless of age, income, or ability, can participate in community life.

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<sup>1</sup> **Rural Recognition: Affordable and Safe Transportation Options for Remote Communities.**  
[Institute for Research on Public Policy](#)

For Colchester, these challenges are amplified by limited transportation alternatives. Existing options such as CTCL’s booked service are often at capacity, require advance notice, or lack evening and weekend availability. Taxi services offer limited accessibility and can be cost-prohibitive, while walking and cycling are constrained by distance, weather, and carrying capacity (e.g., groceries).

The introduction of public transit could substantially enhance social outcomes. Youth would benefit from improved access to after-school programs, part-time employment, and recreational opportunities, reducing dependence on parents or caregivers for transportation. Low-income working residents would have stable access to essential amenities such as groceries, business hubs for employment and community events. Seniors would gain independence and the ability to age in place with dignity by reliably accessing healthcare, shopping, and social activities.

Public transit also has the potential to foster stronger regional ties. By linking Truro with surrounding communities, such as Millbrook, Debert, and Bible Hill, residents can participate more fully in regional services and events, thereby building cohesion across Colchester County. In this way, transit serves not only as a means of moving people but also as an investment in inclusive growth and stronger social infrastructure.

### 3.4.2 Economic Impacts

Public transit systems in small and mid-sized communities can play a critical role in supporting local and regional economic activity. Beyond the direct employment required to operate and administer services, transit enables broader participation in the workforce by reducing mobility barriers for those without access to a private vehicle. This benefits employers just as much as it expands their available labour pool for local employees. Furthermore, by reducing dependence on private vehicles, transit can help reduce or even eliminate the capital and operating costs associated with owning a personal vehicle.

In addition to the benefits that transit can have on the workforce, it can also increase customer access to local businesses. Transit systems serving downtowns and major commercial areas enable residents to access shopping districts and service centers more easily, thereby promoting local demand and economic activity. Expanding transit to rural or dispersed areas extends these benefits to smaller communities, ensuring that local businesses outside of core service areas remain connected to larger regional markets. From a municipal perspective, investment in transit can yield indirect fiscal benefits. Increased economic participation supports personal and business incomes, which in turn generate tax revenues at both the local and provincial levels.

While the true economic impact of introducing a transit system in Colchester can’t be predicted, the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) has published financial statistics up to 2023 for Nova Scotia (NS) and across Canada. Total passenger fare revenue across all public transit in NS peaked in 2019 at approximately \$37.1 million before the COVID-19 pandemic. Although data is unavailable for 2022–2025, revenue recovered to \$22.7 million in 2021 after declining to a 10-year low of \$15.8 million in 2020, which is largely attributed to COVID-19 restrictions. In 2023, total national transit revenue reached \$5.8 billion, supported by an estimated service area population of 26 million people and \$10.84 billion in capital funding sources, largely from provincial, federal, and municipal contributions.

CUTA’s 2019 issue paper, “*The Economic Impact of Transit Investment in Canada*”, further highlights the magnitude of public transit’s contribution to Canada’s economy. The study estimated that the national transit industry generates at least \$19 billion in annual economic benefits, directly employs approximately 59,600 Canadians, and supports over 65,000 jobs through capital investments. According to the same

study, transit reduces personal vehicle operating costs by approximately \$12.6 billion annually and generates around \$609 million in annual tax revenues from capital investment alone.

While these figures represent provincial and national estimates, they illustrate the scale of benefits that even modest local systems can achieve through reduced vehicle dependence, increased employment access, and access to local spending. For Colchester, the economic implications of a future transit system could be significant. Improved access to employment, education, healthcare, and commercial areas can enhance workforce participation, strengthen downtown commercial vitality, and support the town’s regional service hub ambitions. Even a small-scale, reliable transit system could generate measurable economic multipliers by reducing mobility barriers and fostering more inclusive access to opportunity.

Research from multiple jurisdictions indicates a positive correlation between the implementation of public transit and increases in nearby property values<sup>2</sup>. Residential properties located within 20 minute walk to transit service station have been shown to experience appreciation in the range of **4–10%**<sup>2 3 4</sup>, while commercial properties may see increases between **5–40%**<sup>2 3</sup>, depending on service type, frequency, and local market characteristics.

Applying these ranges to current average property values within Truro and Colchester suggests that even modest transit investment has the potential to contribute to incremental real estate value growth (see Figure 16). Although comprehensive commercial property data for the region is limited, the residential estimates illustrate the broader economic implications associated with improved mobility and land-use efficiency.

	Truro		Colchester	
Average property value <sup>5 6</sup>	\$344,560	\$344,560	\$365,514	\$365,514
Appreciation estimate <sup>2 3</sup>	5%	10%	5%	10%
Increase	\$17,228	\$34,456	\$18,276	\$36,551

**Figure 16: Residential property appreciation estimates**

These findings are consistent with the economic development patterns observed in comparable communities, where reliable transit has contributed to increased attractiveness of residential neighbourhoods, strengthened retail corridors, and renewed activity in mixed-use areas.

### 3.4.3 Tourism Impacts

Public transit can generate significant benefits for the tourism sector, particularly in small urban and regional centers that serve as gateways to surrounding attractions. Accessible and affordable transit provides visitors with a convenient way to reach hotels, cultural sites, shopping districts, and recreational facilities without relying on private vehicles. As supported by the case study analysis, local transit within

<sup>2</sup> **Evaluating Transportation Economic Development Impacts.** [Victoria Transport Policy Institute.](#)

<sup>3</sup> **How Transportation Impacts Property Values.** [UrbanTaken](#)

<sup>4</sup> **The effect of bus rapid transit on local home prices.** [ScienceDirect.](#)

<sup>5</sup> **Truro and Colchester Housing Market Outlook (2026).** [REMAX](#)

<sup>6</sup> **Housing Market Report for March 2026.** [Ovlix](#)

each of the case study locations has contributed to the tourism economy by facilitating easier navigation of the town, attendance at events, and support for local businesses.

For Colchester, transit could strengthen its role as a regional hub and a popular destination for visitors. A reliable transit service would enable tourists arriving without a personal vehicle to connect seamlessly to accommodations, attractions, and events within the community. Improved transit connections could also enhance access to regional destinations.

In addition to visitor spending, transit can also support the tourism economy by improving workforce access. Students or seasonal employees, who are often younger workers without reliable access to vehicles, would benefit from affordable transportation to jobs. Over time, enhanced mobility for both visitors and employees can contribute to a more active tourism economy in Colchester.

#### 3.4.4 Employment and Population Impacts

Transit systems can have notable effects on community demographics. By enhancing mobility, communities become more attractive to young families, seniors, and individuals without access to a private vehicle. The availability of transit can support a community's ability to retain youth populations by ensuring access to schools and part-time employment, while also providing seniors with the independence required to age in place.

Looking more broadly at the impacts on employment that a transit system can have at the most basic level, operating a public transit system creates jobs for drivers, dispatchers, schedulers, and administrative staff. Transit systems can also support indirect employment by contributing to local economic development.

More importantly, as described above, transit enables broader workforce participation by connecting residents to employment opportunities. Reliable transit access has been associated with increased employment probabilities of **2–10%**<sup>7</sup>, demonstrating the value of predictable mobility for workers seeking stable access to job opportunities. Case studies consistently showed that transit is most often used to access jobs in retail, healthcare, education, and service sectors. Fixed-route transit in particular has been critical for employees commuting to hospitals, schools, and shopping centers. Similarly, on-demand services in rural areas help ensure that residents in smaller communities can reach employment hubs in nearby towns.

In Colchester's context, reliable transit could help support growth and stability across Colchester County. A transit connection between Truro and Debert, identified as a major employment hub with a documented labour force replacement ratio of **0.67**<sup>8</sup>, could help address labour shortages by broadening access for workers who cannot reliably commute by private vehicle.

Improved connectivity can counterbalance rural depopulation trends by enabling residents in smaller communities to remain in place while still accessing essential services, education, and employment opportunities. Transit could reduce barriers for those without access to a vehicle, particularly youth and lower-income residents. Affordable and reliable transit would also strengthen the seasonal workforce, supporting tourism, retail, and hospitality jobs by making positions accessible to individuals who might otherwise be excluded due to transportation challenges. Over time, enhanced workforce mobility can contribute to greater economic resilience and competitiveness for the town and the surrounding region.

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<sup>7</sup> Does transport help people to gain employment. [White Rose Research Online](#)

<sup>8</sup> Economic Development Summary. [Debert Business Park](#).

### 3.4.5 Regional Infrastructure and Housing

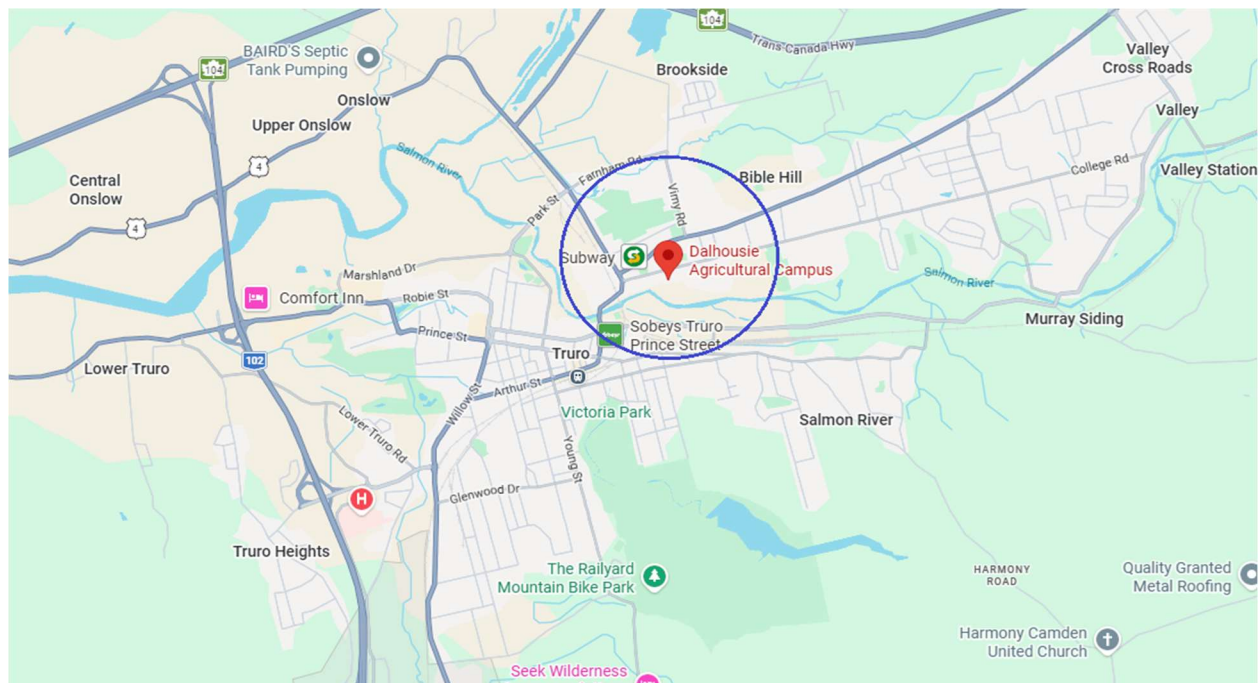
Transit is closely linked to patterns of infrastructure development and housing. Many people, particularly students, seniors, low-income individuals, and those with accessibility challenges, choose housing based on the availability of public transit. Communities with accessible public transit are more inclusive and can attract more people to the area. It also provides those with no other means of transportation with increased access to more affordable housing, which is often located outside of urban centres.

According to CUTA's 2019 issue paper, "*The Economic Impact of Transit Investment in Canada*", transit systems can also influence the efficiency of local road networks and the demand for parking infrastructure. In small urban centres, transit has helped reduce traffic congestion, which is especially useful during peak hours, particularly around schools, hospitals, and commercial areas. Even modest reductions in personal vehicles can have significant effects in towns where road networks are limited and parking supply is under pressure. For municipalities, reducing reliance on personal vehicles can also delay or eliminate the need for costly investments in road widening, new intersections, or expanded parking facilities.

For Colchester, a future transit system could support housing affordability and long-term planning objectives by reducing the reliance on private vehicles, thereby lowering household transportation costs, increasing access to affordable housing, and reducing parking in downtown cores. Over time, transit investment could help attract new housing developments in Colchester's residential areas while also ensuring regional residents can access essential amenities. By providing reliable alternatives, transit could also improve safety by reducing traffic volumes during peak times. These reductions can contribute to more efficient land use in Colchester, freeing up space that would be needed for parking to support other community priorities such as housing, green space, or commercial development.

Truro hosts two significant post-secondary institutions, NSCC Truro Campus and Dalhousie University's Agricultural Campus, each contributing to regional population growth and economic activity. While many NSCC students are presumed to be local and have access to transportation, Dalhousie's Agricultural Campus attracts a larger proportion of students from outside the region, many of whom may not have reliable transportation.

Current off-campus housing opportunities are constrained by distance from the Dalhousie campus, with a reasonable walking catchment limited to approximately 20 minutes (see Figure 17). This restricts student choice, places pressure on nearby rental supply and increases reliance on CTCL.



**Figure 17: Estimated Dalhousie Student Housing Catchment**

A fixed-route transit system would extend the effective student housing catchment, improve access to academic, commercial, and social destinations, and reduce dependency on specialized transit services. Increased mobility for students may also contribute to stronger local spending and more efficient utilization of existing housing stock.

### 3.4.6 Increase CTCL Capacity to Focus on High-Needs Individuals

Rural transportation systems frequently play a critical role in serving residents with the highest mobility needs, including seniors, people with disabilities, and individuals requiring recurring medical or social service appointments. CTCL has historically filled this gap; however, growing demand from broader user groups has strained its ability to prioritize high-need clients.

Introducing a conventional public transit service, particularly routes between Truro, Debert, and key community hubs, would help shift general-purpose riders (e.g., workers, students, non-medical trips) away from CTCL. This rebalancing would allow CTCL to focus on specialized mobility needs, reduce wait times, improve booking flexibility, and enhance the overall accessibility of the transportation network.

### 3.4.7 Environmental Impacts

Public transit offers significant opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, improve air quality, and support climate adaptation goals. In smaller urban and rural communities, a large share of trips are made by personal vehicles. Introducing a reliable and convenient transit system can shift a portion of these trips to shared modes, directly reducing emissions proportionate to the number of riders. Even modest transit investments can generate significant reductions in car dependency, which in turn can help alleviate local traffic congestion, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and other air pollutants.

In CUTA's *"The GHG Reduction Impact of Public Transit"*, it was highlighted that Canada's transportation sector represents 24% of carbon emissions in Canada. Canada aims to achieve a zero-emission by 2050 and has available funding to help municipalities reach this goal through public transit. According to the

CUTA GHG report, it was estimated that someone can reduce their GHG emissions per km by approximately 77% if they decide to use a standard diesel bus. This reduction would be even greater with the implementation of zero-emission options such as electric buses.

For Colchester, where many residents must travel to access employment, healthcare, and education, a local and regional transit system could play a central role in advancing environmental sustainability. Reduced reliance on private vehicles would not only cut emissions but also decrease fuel costs for households, improve air quality, and contribute to broader climate resilience objectives in Nova Scotia. Transit also aligns with provincial and federal policy directions emphasizing climate action and sustainable community development.

## 4.0 Conclusion

This Transit Impact Analysis demonstrates clear and sustained community support for exploring public transit options within the Town of Truro and the Municipality of Colchester, while also highlighting the complexity of balancing coverage, frequency, affordability, and long-term sustainability. Through an extensive program of public and stakeholder engagement, combined with a review of comparable transit systems in similar rural and small urban contexts, the study has identified both the challenges residents currently face and the potential benefits that improved transit could deliver.

Engagement findings consistently indicate that transportation barriers affect a broad range of residents, with particularly pronounced impacts on seniors, people with disabilities, low-income households, youth, students, and residents of rural and outlying communities. Limited-service hours, infrequent or unavailable options, high taxi costs, and accessibility constraints contribute to social isolation, reduced access to employment and healthcare, and challenges in meeting daily needs. At the same time, residents expressed strong interest in public transit as a form of essential social infrastructure that supports independence, inclusion, and quality of life.

The evaluation of service concepts confirmed that there is no single solution that meets all needs. Trade-offs between broader geographic coverage and higher service frequency were clearly articulated by the public, with preferences varying based on individual travel patterns, location, and priorities. Similarly, feedback on service hours, stop spacing, and priority destinations reinforces the importance of aligning any future transit service with real-world travel demands, particularly for employment, healthcare, education, and essential services.

Lessons drawn from comparable municipalities across Nova Scotia demonstrate that even modest, well-designed transit systems can deliver meaningful social, economic, and environmental benefits. Case studies highlight the value of phased implementation, hybrid service models, effective communication, and ongoing community engagement in refining services over time. They also underscore the importance of accessibility, affordability, and reliability in building public trust and long-term ridership.

Taken together, the findings of this Impact Analysis provide the Town of Truro and the Municipality of Colchester with a strong, evidence-based foundation to inform future discussions related to transit planning, funding, and implementation. It clearly establishes the potential impacts, community priorities, and key considerations that should guide next steps. As Colchester considers how and when to advance transit initiatives, the insights documented in this report can support informed decision-making that reflects both community needs and regional context, while laying the groundwork for a more connected, inclusive, and resilient transportation system.

## Appendix 1 CASE STUDY ANALYSIS: LESSONS LEARNED QUESTIONS

### Lessons Learned & Advice for Colchester

1. What lessons have you learned during the implementation and operation of your transit system?
2. What would you do differently if starting over?
3. What advice would you give a town like Colchester that is exploring transit options for the first time?

### Performance & Planning

4. How do you measure the success of your system?
5. Have you made any recent changes based on performance or community feedback?
6. Are there any planned improvements or service expansions in the near future?
7. What are the biggest challenges you're currently facing?

### Ridership & Usage Information

8. How many people currently use your transit service? Can you provide ridership data (daily, monthly, annual)?
9. What is the demographic profile of your riders (age, occupation, accessibility)?
10. What is the utilization rate of your service (actual vs. expected ridership)?

### Community Feedback & Satisfaction (Perceived or Collect Data if Available)

11. Do you collect feedback from your riders? If so, what methods do you use (surveys, public meetings)?
12. What are your satisfaction levels like among riders?
13. Would your users recommend the service to others?
14. Have users provided feedback on affordability, convenience, and reliability?
15. What are the most common barriers or unmet needs riders express?
16. What would make non-users consider using your service?

### Transit Operations & Service Offerings

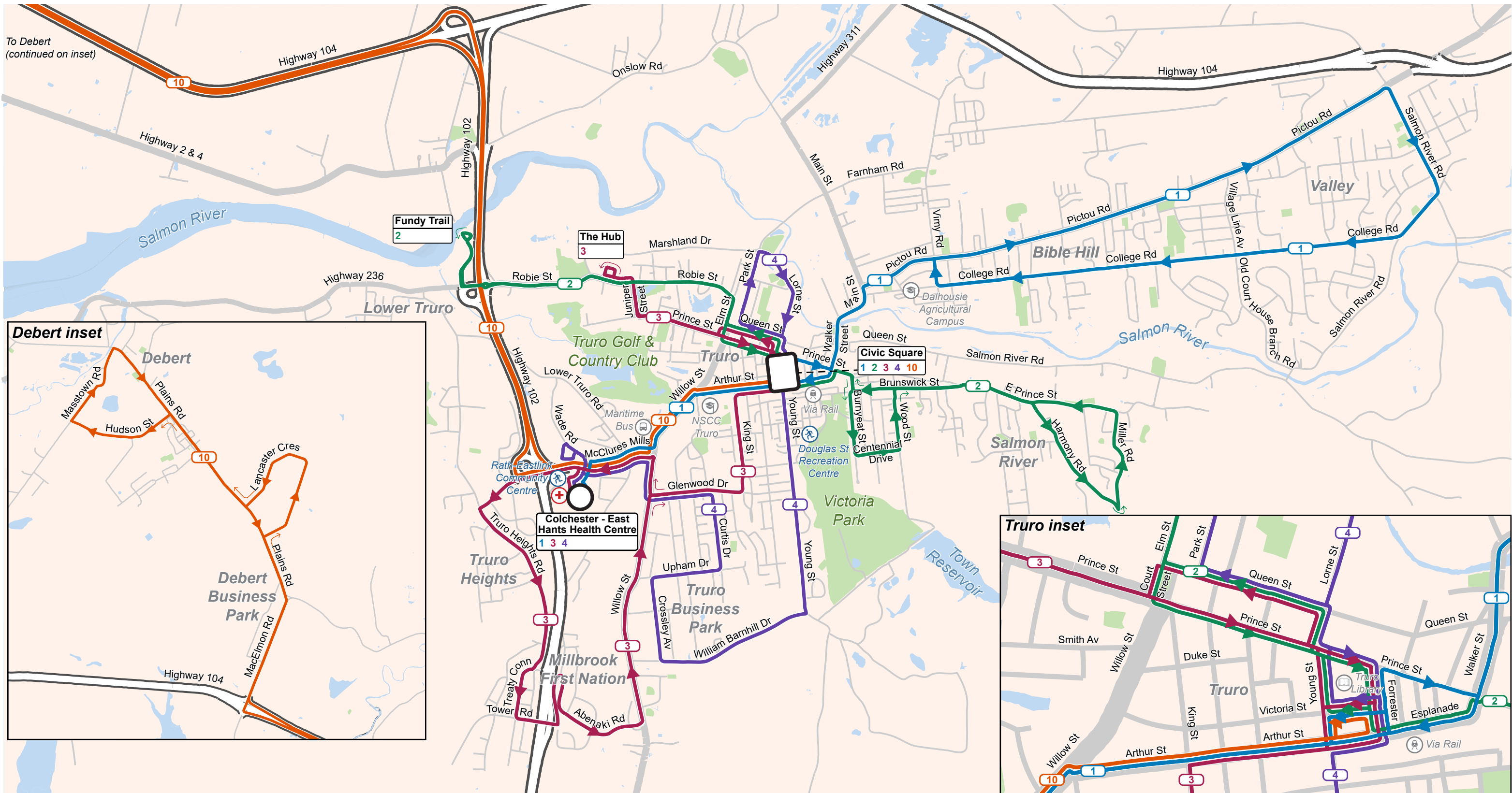
17. What are your most popular or common routes? (Rural vs Urban?)
18. What amenities or technologies do you offer (e.g., dispatch, app booking, vehicle type)?
19. Have you implemented or considered new booking systems or digital platforms? If so, what?

### Accessibility & Target Users

20. How does your service support accessibility needs (e.g., wheelchair access, scheduling assistance)?
21. Do you coordinate with taxis, active transportation, or inter-regional transit? If so, How?
22. Do you promote inclusion, equity, and access for marginalized groups? If so, How?

# Appendix B

## Conceptual Transit Network System Map

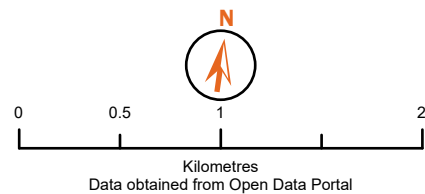


**Index of Transit Routes**

- 1 Bible Hill/Valley - Hospital
- 2 Salmon River - Robie Street
- 3 Millbrook First Nation - The Hub
- 4 South End - Colchester Legion Stadium
- 10 Debert

**Legend**

- Transit Route
- One-Way Transit Route
- Transit Hub
- Point of Interest
- Truro** Community Name



# Appendix C

## Capital and Operating Cost Inputs

## 1 Key Unit Cost Summary (Operating Expenditure)

The unit cost figures presented in Exhibit 1 reflect a blended input base drawn from multiple sources to contextualize Truro and Colchester Transit’s operating costs. Primary inputs come from CTCL provided cost data for the Truro and Colchester fleet, with peer-system inputs drawn from CUTA reported benchmarks, and supplementary data from recognized industry sources where CTCL data were incomplete or not applicable. This approach supports a transparent, cross-checked basis for unit-cost calculations used in the operating expenditure model.

*Exhibit 1: Operating Expenditure Input Assumptions*

<b>Cost Component</b>	<b>Unit Cost</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Vehicle Cost	\$18.52 per service hour	Derived from CTCL internal data for the Colchester Transit fleet (2022–2025), cross-checked against CUTA peer benchmarks; the rate reflects averaging the lower CTCL input with higher peer-system costs attributed to heavy-duty vehicle complexity to hedge estimates. Many of CTCL’s existing vehicles are smaller than the proposed transit fleet and are expected to cost slightly less to operate than the recommended shuttle-type vehicles.
Fuel Cost	\$11.92 per service hour	Derived from peer-system benchmarks (CUTA-reported peers) for heavy-duty buses, where the benchmark fuel cost was \$17.77 per service hour. To better reflect the expected fuel consumption of Arboc-style shuttle vehicles (which are smaller and more fuel-efficient than standard heavy-duty buses), a 2/3 scaling factor was applied to the peer benchmark. This adjustment is informed by industry guidance (e.g., APTA fuel consumption comparisons) and practical experience, ensuring the operating model does not overstate fuel costs for the planned shuttle fleet. CTCL’s own fuel expense data from 2022–2025 were used to cross-check the appropriateness of this adjustment.

Cost Component	Unit Cost	Notes
Driver Wages	\$28.76 per service hour	Based on driver wages averaged across multiple years and peer system data, smoothing anomalous spikes.
Total Operating Cost	\$59.20 per service hour	Includes vehicle + fuel + driver cost
Escalated Total Cost	\$77.61 per service hour	Based on escalated annual operational cost (escalation factor of 3% per annum)
Plant Operations	\$8707.92 per bus per year	Plant Ops Cost per bus is allocated from facility-level O&M costs using a peer-average split that reflects CTCL's share of fleet usage.
Administrative Costs	\$141,178.46 per year	Assumes 2 full-time equivalents: a Transit Manager and a supporting non-manager role at 2/3 manager pay, based on local salary data published on independent sources.
Vehicle Permits	\$750 per year	Fixed fleet-level permit costs.
Insurance	\$36,355.50 per year	Assumed constant for a fleet of 7 vehicles.
Annual Operational Cost	\$1.69 M	Calculated 2023 baseline, as input costs are based on 2023 published operating data.
Escalated Operational Cost	\$1.90 M	Projected to 2027 with 3% annual inflation which is based on Bank of Canada inflation rate of 2.84% past ten years (2016-25)

### Assumption and Notes

- **Fleet Composition:** 7 Arboc Freedom (or equivalent) shuttle buses, capital cost \$225,000 each (total \$1.575M).
- **Service Hours:** Assumed steady at 24,504 revenue hours annually for projections, based on the conceptual transit network.
- **Fare:** \$3.00 per trip used for revenue estimates.
- **Ridership:** Ramp-up from 50% to 100% over the first 3 years post-launch.
- **Inflation:** 3% annual escalation applied to costs for projections to 2027.

- **Cost Allocations:** Plant operations and admin costs allocated across fleet and hours; peer averages used where local data not available.
- **Sensitivity Considerations:** Fuel price volatility, driver wage fluctuations, and service hour changes can materially affect unit costs.

## 2 Key Unit Cost Summary (Capital Expenditure)

The unit cost figures presented in Exhibit 2 and Exhibit 3 reflect a blended input base drawn from multiple sources to inform Truro and Colchester Transit’s capital requirements. Primary inputs include Arcadis unit-cost estimates derived from previous and ongoing transit facility design projects (for example, the Transit Implementation Plan for the Town of Halton Hills) together with regional studies and supplier pricing. Where relevant, published guidance and local design standards (e.g., Grand River Transit Bus Stop Design Guidelines; Halifax BRT study) were used to validate component-level costs. This blended approach provides a transparent, cross-checked basis for the stop-infrastructure and facility-capital estimates in the model.

Exhibit 2 outlines the input assumptions for capital cost expenditure and assumptions for Truro and Colchester Transit stop infrastructure.

*Exhibit 2: Capital Expenditure Input Assumptions*

<b>Capital Item</b>	<b>Unit Cost</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Stop Install (Signpost & Pad)	\$3,000	Included in all stops
Shelter	\$20,000	Included in High-Density & Major Stops
Bench	\$1,500	Included in High-Density & Major Stops
Bike Rack	\$500	Included in Major Stops
Lighting	\$3,000	Included in Major Stops
Real Time Info Display	\$5,000	Included in Major Stops
Waste Receptacle	\$3,000	Included in Major Stops
Concrete Boarding Pad	\$3,000	Included in all stops

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Exhibit 3: Capital Cost Summary – Stop Infrastructure & Facility Costs

Capital Item	Quantity	Estimated Total Cost	Notes
<b>Stop Infrastructure</b>			
Major Stops	4 stops	\$112,000	Includes shelter, bench, bike rack, lighting, RTI, waste receptacle, boarding pad, sign/post
Stops in High-Density Areas	20 stops	\$90,000	Includes shelter, bench, sign/post, boarding pad; fewer amenities than major stops
Remaining Stops	215 stops	\$645,000	Baseline stop install: signpost and concrete boarding pad
<b>Total Stop Infrastructure Cost</b>	<b>239 stops</b>	<b>\$847,000</b>	Sum of all stop categories
<b>Facility Costs</b>			
Building Renovation	Lump Sum	\$2,000,000	Renovation of existing building for transit use
Charging Station	Lump Sum	\$300,000	EV charging infrastructure
Electrical Service Upgrades	Lump Sum	\$300,000	Upgrades to electrical supply for facility
Fuel Infrastructure	Lump Sum	\$200,000	Fuel storage and dispensing infrastructure
Design and Engineering	Lump Sum	\$500,000	Architectural, engineering, and design fees
Permits and Approvals	Lump Sum	\$200,000	Permitting and regulatory approvals
Contingency	Lump Sum	\$1,000,000	Contingency allowance
Land Acquisition	Lump Sum	\$200,000	Cost of land purchase or easements
<b>Total Facility Cost</b>		<b>\$4,700,000</b>	Sum of all facility cost items

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### **Assumption and Notes**

- Unit costs presented in the table are Arcadis estimates derived from our experience on previous transit facility design projects, including ongoing work such as the Transit Implementation Plan for the Town of Halton Hills. These estimates reflect typical costs for stop infrastructure elements but exclude design fees, permitting, contingency, land acquisition, and any major civil works beyond standard boarding pads.
- Concrete boarding pad and bus stop sign/post costs are embedded in baseline stop install cost for remaining stops.
- Major stops have a higher amenity level; cost per stop may vary based on procurement and site conditions.
- High-density stops have moderate amenities (e.g., shelter and seating).
- Stop infrastructure costs are Arcadis estimates informed by previous transit facility design projects and regional cost benchmarks; exclusions include design fees, permits, contingency, major civil works and land acquisition.
- Facility costs are lump-sum estimates based on current project scope.
- Contingency is applied to cover unforeseen costs and price escalation.
- All costs presented in CAD.

### 3 References

Table Source Name	Full Source Reference
CTCL Cost Breakdown	Cost Breakdown for Operational Costs CTCL
APTA Fact Book	APTA Public Transportation Fact Book, 2025
Statistics Canada	Monthly average retail prices for gasoline and fuel oil, by geography, Statistics Canada
Grand River Transit	Grand River Transit Bus Stop Design Guidelines, 2024
Halifax BRT Study	Halifax Bus Rapid Transit Study, 2018
Town of Halton Hills	Transit Implementation Plan, Town of Halton Hills (On-going)
London Transit Commission	Staff Report #1 – 2026 Bus Replacement and Expansion Programs – London Transit Commission
Toronto Transit Commission - Wheel Trans	Supply of Battery-Electric Paratransit Buses and Green Bus Program Update, Toronto Transit Commission, 2025
Saint John Transit	Saint John Transit Article on CBC News <a href="https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/saint-john-transit-aging-bus-fleet-e-bus-diesel-canadian-urban-transit-association-1.7440625">https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/saint-john-transit-aging-bus-fleet-e-bus-diesel-canadian-urban-transit-association-1.7440625</a>
Orangeville Transit	Orangeville Transit, Transit Bus Procurement Report, 2025
Milton Transit - Access +	Milton Transit - Access +, Schedule D Joint Procurement of Transit Minibus Purchase.doc
Niagara Transit	Niagara Transit Commission, Bus Procurements – Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program Application, August 2023
Merritt Regional Transit System	Merritt Regional Transit System <a href="https://www.bctransit.com/bc-transit-welcomes-new-bus-2/">https://www.bctransit.com/bc-transit-welcomes-new-bus-2/</a>
Prince George Transit System	Prince George Transit System <a href="https://www.bctransit.com/bc-transit-welcomes-new-buses-6/">https://www.bctransit.com/bc-transit-welcomes-new-buses-6/</a>
Chilliwack Transit System	Chilliwack Transit <a href="https://www.bctransit.com/bc-transit-welcomes-new-buses/">https://www.bctransit.com/bc-transit-welcomes-new-buses/</a>
Tecumseh Transit Service	Tecumseh Transit <a href="https://www.dameracorp.com/customers-collection/tecumseh-transit">https://www.dameracorp.com/customers-collection/tecumseh-transit</a>

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