

Department 25 – Community Transportation Services (Transit)

Overview

This Department provides for the costs and revenues for the transportation pilot.

The Province's original commitment of \$1.48 million to support a transportation pilot through the Ministry of Transportation Community Transportation Grant was increased by \$884,625.78 for a total commitment of \$2.36 million. An extension for the pilot was also granted to March 2026.

General Service Description

- ✓ 5 days per week (Monday to Friday)
- ✓ Service commenced in May 2021
- ✓ Operates 250 days
- ✓ City of Peterborough – Operator
- ✓ Two Routes Route 31: Lakefield/Curve Lake First Nation and Route 32 Bridgenorth/Ennismore
- ✓ Ability to transfer to City of Peterborough Transit (at Trent U.)
- ✓ Ability to transfer to GO Bus (at Trent U)
- ✓ Partners include: Curve Lake First Nation, Community Care and the City of Peterborough.
- ✓ Trent Central Student Association (TCSA) – partner since 2021
- ✓ Fleming Student Administrative Council (FSAC) – partner since 2023

Revenue



The major source of revenue for this department has been derived from the Provincial Ministry of Transportation grant. In 2025, the Township received a 1-year extension to this funding to allow the Township to optimize the use of the remaining grant funds. Funding from this program will end on March 31, 2026.

There is also revenue allocated from fares from those using the bus service. In 2021, the Trent Central Student Association (TCSA) entered into an agreement with the Township to provide bussing services for Trent students. In 2025 the TCSA contributed \$75,000 to the service. In addition, an agreement with the Fleming Student Administrative Council (FSAC) was also in place with a contribution of \$50,000 added to revenues.

Negotiations with TCSA and FSAC have taken place on the basis of the service potentially continuing beyond the pilot. TCSA has confirmed that their contribution in 2026 would increase to \$100,000 and would increase by CPI each year thereafter under a 5-year agreement. FSAC has confirmed that their contribution in 2026 would increase to \$75,000 and would increase by CPI each year thereafter under a 5-year agreement.

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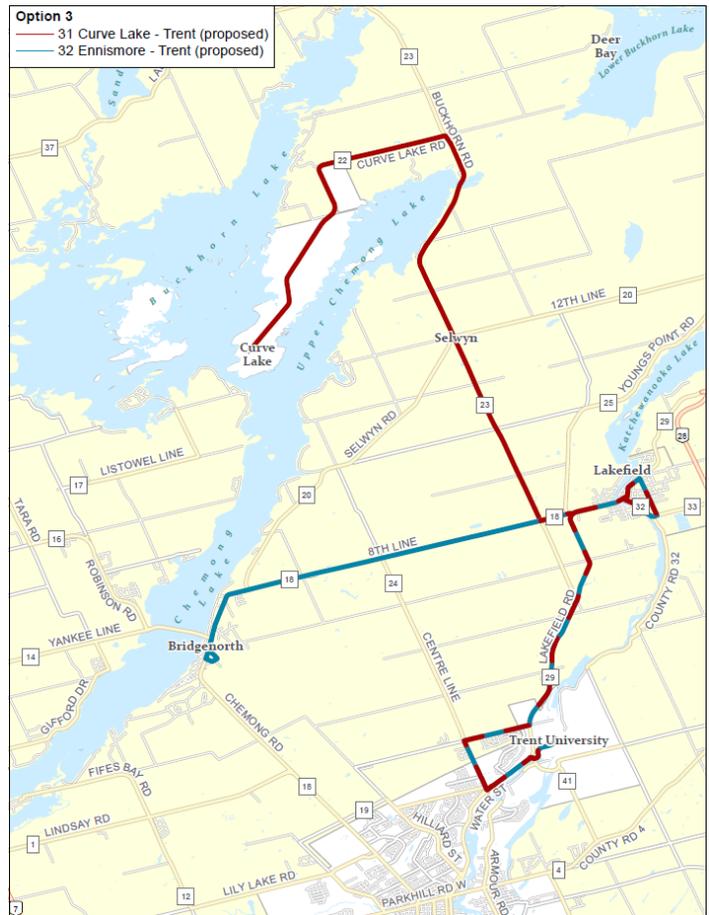
If The Link becomes a permanent service on April 1st, 2026, there will be additional sources of revenue to support the service, including Provincial Gas Tax Funding, and an annual contribution from Curve Lake First Nation up to \$55,000 (2026).

Expenditures

The City of Peterborough is the contractor for the service. Partners and riders are very pleased with this arrangement. The service is reliable, it offers several route options, and it provides for a transfer at Trent University allowing riders to transfer onto the City's transit system as well as connecting to the Metrolinx Go Bus. Expenses for the contract with the City of Peterborough have been allocated into the budget.

Expenses have also been allocated for the costs of route maps, advertising, staff support etc... The majority of expenses have been covered by the MTO grant with a small transfer to cover ineligible expenses such as insurance.

Expenditures are based on Council's direction from the October 28, 2025, meeting to explore the continuation of the service with a new modified route 31 and 32 system. The service would be based on a Trunk and Branch model. The Trunk portion offering more service on the highest ridership portion of the route (Woodland Acres and Lakefield) and the Branch portion serving Curve Lake First Nation and Bridgenorth (discontinuing service to Ennismore).



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2026 Budget

The 2026 budget has been developed based on receiving funding from the Province until March 31, 2026. This funding is expected to cover the first 3 months of expenditures for 2026 with the exception of insurance (ineligible expense). The budget includes forecasts for the remaining 9 months in 2026 as well as a forecast for building in taxation support over the next term of Council (2027 – 2030) with the remainder funded from the Sustainability Reserve.

With expected revenue from fares, Provincial Gas Tax Funding, Trent University, Fleming College, and Curve Lake First Nation, the Township anticipates the net cost of The Link in 2026 to be \$95,987. This is anticipated to increase to \$139,429 in 2027 without the Provincial grant. The chart below demonstrates the phase-in of the required taxation over the next 5 years to support the service. As noted above the reserve contributions required to support the phase-in would come from the Sustainability Reserve.

Year	Net Expense	New Additional Taxation	Built in Taxation from Previous Year(s)	Reserve
2026	\$ 99,811	\$29,935	\$ 0	\$69,877
2027 (1 st year no CT Grant)	\$132,429	\$29,935	\$29,935	\$72,559
2028	\$136,728	\$29,935	\$59,870	\$46,923
2029	\$141,101	\$29,935	\$89,805	\$21,361
2030	\$145,549	\$29,935	\$119,740	(\$4125)

Statistics

Since launching in 2021, ridership grew significantly each year through to 2024. Although ridership declined in 2025, this can be attributed to several disruptions that impacted service, including severe weather events that led to full-service cancellations and an ice storm in March that caused extended service outages. Federal and Provincial changes to international student enrollment criteria have also impacted ridership. This change has affected all transit providers in Ontario. Based on this, estimated fare revenue has been established at \$35,750 in the 2026 budget to align with expected fare revenues. Budget forecasting is using 2025 revenues and expenditures as the typical base costs for the service.



Year	Total Boardings	Average Monthly Boardings
2021	4,296	537
2022	8,476	706
2023	18,115	1,510
2024	23,888	1,991
2025	15,876	1,366

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2025 Ridership/Boarding

In 2025, The Link Bus recorded an average of 1,366 boardings per month, with a total of 15,876 boardings for the year. There has been a slight shift in ridership route distribution this year. Route 31 continues to lead with 57% of total boardings (9,014), while Route 32 accounts for 43% (6,862).

On average, students from Trent University and Fleming College account for approximately 75% of trips taken on The Link bus with the remaining 25% comprised of general riders. The majority of the passes sold are monthly and 10-ride passes demonstrating that our general riders are regular users.

Activity Update – Beyond Budget and Dollars and Cents

Improved Connection with GO Transit

In December 2024, the Township worked with Metrolinx to improve connectivity for riders between The Link and GO Transit. The Link Route 31 schedule was updated to ensure efficient and timely connections for riders connecting with GO Route 88 at Trent University. This improves broader transit connectivity within the region and enables Link riders to access services locally and beyond.

2025 Shuttles to Community Events

The Link being provincially funded has allowed the Township to support shuttles to several community events in recent years. In 2025, The Link bus operated a shuttle to the following local events:

- Lakefield Jazz, Art & Craft Festival
- Lakefield Literary Festival
- Curve Lake Pow Wow
- Curve Lake Mnoominkewin Gathering

The shuttles had varying levels of ridership but were overall successful, well received, and appreciated by event organizers and attendees. Providing The Link as a shuttle to community events supports the Township's Green Event Policy and helps improve the environmental impact of local events.

