

STAFF REPORT

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF COBOURG



Report to:	Mayor and Council Members	Priority:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Low
Submitted by:	Laurie Wills Director, Public Works lwills@cobourg.ca	Meeting Type:	Open Session <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Closed Session <input type="checkbox"/>
Meeting Date:	March 29, 2021		
Report No.:	Public Works-027-21		
Submit comments to Council			

Subject/Title: Phase 3 Safe Restart Agreement Transit Proposal

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council direct Staff to implement an online payment and contactless smart card transit pass system from TransitFare & Systems Ltd. in the amount of \$20,000.00 including HST; and,

FURTHER THAT maintenance, data and hosting fees in the amount of approximately \$5,000.00 be funded in the 2022 transit operational budget.

1. STRATEGIC PLAN

Invest in programs, services and infrastructure to make Cobourg more accessible

2. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

N/A

3. PURPOSE

To implement a way for riders to purchase single ride or discounted passes either online or by way of a reloadable smart card option.

4. ORIGIN AND LEGISLATION

Since the closure of Victoria Hall in March, 2020 transit passes have not been available for purchase and all transit fare collection on transit buses were suspended to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. Following the installation of plexiglass barriers and with now readily available PPE and cleaning supplies for drivers, the Town was able to resume transit fare collection on January 26, 2021 with the limitation of only being able to accept cash fares as well as honouring pre-

purchased transit tickets. Operating through the pandemic has emphasized the importance of incorporating alternative payment and purchasing options to reduce or eliminate barriers for all residents and customers as well as ensuring the continuance of fare collection to fund this expensive service.

There is an urgency amongst municipalities and transit authorities to adopt contactless solutions as part of an overall strategy to help limit interactions with surfaces at counters, ticket machines and cash handling.

In order for the Town to encourage and maximize ridership and subsequently revenue and gas tax funding, transit must be easier to access without having to have an exact cash fare or visit a Town facility during regular business hours to obtain a pass. Smart cards and online purchasing capabilities will be a much more efficient, faster, safer and convenient means for fare collection for both riders and staff.

5. BACKGROUND

Currently the Town's system for providing and distributing transit passes is quite manual whereby riders have to visit Town Hall in person to have their photo taken and then wait for the staff member to manually create a laminated pass with the photo and validation period. Approximately 90% of riders purchase passes on a monthly basis so for them to have to go through this process every month is very inconvenient and time consuming for both riders and staff. Regardless of when Victoria Hall opens, this manual pass system must be updated especially with all the new technologies and methods that are available now and are affordable. Not to mention that once the on demand transit pilot launches, ridership is expected to increase and it will increase considerably more if passes are easy to obtain and payable online.

The proposed smart cards are similar to gift certificates that can be for one time use, multiple uses or reloadable depending on what a person may need. For those who are able to utilize online payment for passes, they need only to buy a reloadable card once, have it registered online and then continue to add value to it as needed. Upon Council approval to proceed, Staff will be actively searching for local retailers who may be interested in selling transit passes.

For those who cannot pay online, they can simply go to any location where passes are sold. It is expected that passes will be sold at Victoria Hall, the CCC, the Library and at Building 7. Alternatively, Town Staff can also be contacted to set up their reloadable pass for them over the telephone. Ideally, there are many establishments in Town where local retailers can sell transit passes as well. This way, passes will be much more readily available to residents and visitors as they can be accessed all over town and will not be limited to just Town Hall operating hours and location.

Cobourg Transit's current vendor for transit technology is TransitFare & Systems. Existing services provided by TransitFare and Systems include: Automated Stop Announcements and Passenger Counters on three (3) 30' buses.

TransitFare conducted a demo of their services with Town staff in August 2020. Current hardware/software services with TransitFare are compatible, however they do require an upgrade in order to accept smart card technology. A transit

portal will be created for customer management and payment transactions for online services which will provide a variety of transit passes available to riders. Two (2) desktop USB contactless smartcard terminals will be provided for staff to utilize in the Finance and Engineering Departments. Similar municipalities are currently using or in the process of launching TransitFare & Systems technology, such as Chatham-Kent and Fort-Erie.

When the Town launches the on demand pilot this spring, the software will also be able to offer a single ride payment online for convenience and eventually will have the capability of selling discounted passes. However, the timing for the pass capability is unknown and Staff are cognizant that only providing an online payment method through RideCo will limit riders who cannot pay online. It is important to have the smart cards available as an option as well as the RideCo payment application.

6. ANALYSIS

Staff have researched and inquired with two (2) other providers of hardware and software for online/smart card capabilities. These potential providers were offering above services at exuberant costs. Neither of the providers were offering hardware or software that was compatible with our current technology and were far more expensive for that reason. The TransitFare option only requires updates and add-ons to our current transit technology.

TransitFare & Systems Cost Breakdown:

Company Name	Lump Sum	Annual Fees
TransitFare & Systems	\$20,000.00 (inc. tax) Includes hardware, upgrade to existing hardware, configuration, installation, set-up and supply of 1,000 smart cards.	Annual Hosting, Data, & Maintenance Year 2 and 3 – ~\$5,000.00

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/BUDGET IMPACTS

On March 3, 2021 the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) notified the Town of Cobourg of funding that is specific to transit that will be available through Phase 3 of the Safe Restart Agreement (SRA). Cobourg’s allocation is \$82,629.00.

Staff attended a web based information session with the MTO about eligible expenses/initiatives and specifically inquired about on demand pilot projects as well as contactless payment system implementation. It was confirmed that the contactless payment system could be funded 100% and the on demand pilot program could qualify for 50% funding for all expenditures between the period of April 1, 2021 to December 31, 2021 or into 2022 if granted an extension.

The 2021 transit operations budget included \$40,000 for the on demand pilot. Staff shall claim the expenses associated with the on demand pilot as well as for the

contactless smart card transit pass system in the amount of \$60,000.00 of which \$40,000 is expected to be reimbursed by funding from the SRA.

In summary, it is fully anticipated that both transit initiatives will be completed within the current transit operating budget.

8. CONCLUSION

That Council direct Staff to retain TransitFare & Systems Ltd for the implementation of an online payment and contactless smart card transit pass system in the amount of \$20,000.

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Phase 3 Safe Restart Agreement - Transit Proposal - Public Works-027-21.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Mar 18, 2021

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Tracey Vaughan, Chief Administrative Officer - Mar 18, 2021 - 5:35 PM