



## **The Corporation of the Town of LaSalle**

**To:** Mayor and Members of Council

**Prepared by:** Dawn Hadre, Director of Strategy and Engagement Department

**Department:** Strategy and Engagement

**Date of Report:** July 19, 2024

**Report Number:** SE-03-2024

**Subject:** SE-03-2024 LaSalle Transit Update and Master Plan

### **Recommendation**

That the report of the Director of Strategy and Engagement dated July 19, 2024 (SE-03-2024) regarding a LaSalle Transit Update and Master Plan be received.

### **Report**

LaSalle Transit was launched in 2017. The Town of LaSalle entered into an agreement with Transit Windsor for operation of two buses in 2017 for five years. In 2022, LaSalle Council and Transit Windsor extended that agreement until August 31, 2027.

Route 25, named in honour of the Town of LaSalle's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, offers riders two route options operating from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm Monday to Saturday, with a second bus running during peak morning and afternoon hours. There are 89 bus stops along the route. It takes approximately 45 minutes for one bus to travel the entire route. The current route captures approximately 70% of the houses located in LaSalle's urban area, which is within a 400m walking distance to a nearby stop.

LaSalle Transit follows the same fee schedule as Transit Windsor starting at \$3.75 per ride, with options for various types of passes (Smart, Class, Affordable Pass Program, etc.). Riders can also use the University of Windsor UPASS or St. Clair College SaintsPASS to take LaSalle Transit. In addition, there are a number of special fare days and programs including:

- anyone in a military uniform may ride for free on LaSalle Transit route 25 on D-Day (June 6), Raid on Dieppe (August 19), Remembrance Day (November 11)
- seniors (ages 60+) pay \$1 cash fare per ride on LaSalle Transit route 25 for the month of June in recognition of senior's month
- students ride for \$1 cash fare per ride on LaSalle Transit route 25 during the week of March break

- youths can purchase a Summer Saver two-month pass offering savings to youth (ages 13-19) in July and August
- Veterans can apply for their free lifetime transit pass through the Transit Windsor website

Free rides were offered in 2017, from the launch, in September to December. Fares were collected beginning in January 2018. Between 2017 and 2019, LaSalle Transit averaged an annual ridership of 22,862.

As ridership was growing, unfortunately the COVID pandemic affected transit service and in April 2020, it was shut down for one month. The service then operated with safety measures in place and at a reduced operation schedule for about two years. Between 2020 and 2022, the total ridership was around 32,000. Ridership started to rebound quickly when service returned to full operation on September 6, 2022. Ridership was close to 8,000 between September and December, with the overall ridership in 2022 reaching 16,856.

In 2023, LaSalle Transit reached its highest ridership to date at 31,789. If this is compared to the 2017-2019 annual average of 22,862 (pre-COVID ridership), 2023 saw an increase of 139% in ridership. From a rider perspective, the highest full fare cash sales are attributed to adults, followed by youth and then seniors. In addition, more than 20,000 rides were provided to students with passes, followed by more than 3,000 adult passes, over 900 senior passes and over 800 youth passes. See the attached LaSalle Transit Ridership report for a comparison of riders pre-COVID to 2023.

In the first six months of operation in 2024, ridership is slightly above the same time period in 2023. Overall, transit service ridership has exceeded the expectations of administration, and shows the value in the service that is provided to our community.

### **Shuttles**

The Town has taken advantage of having LaSalle Transit in operation to contract shuttle service under the current agreement to special events like the LaSalle Strawberry Festival fireworks. In addition, free transit service is offered Thursday through Saturday of the LaSalle Strawberry Festival with extended hours of operation to match those of the festival. A shuttle service was also offered between the Vollmer Complex and the Event Centre during the Last Call Before Fall event. In these cases, transit provides an opportunity to address parking congestion at event sites. These shuttles and periods of free service are useful to encourage the public to try the service at no cost so that they may consider using the service again in the future.

### **Ontario's Gas Tax Program**

Through the 2013 Ontario Budget, the Ontario Legislature passed the Dedicated Funding for Public Transportation Act, 2013, which made the funding of two cents per litre of the Gas Tax permanent. Ontario's Dedicated Gas Tax Funds for Public Transportation (Gas Tax) Program provides a long-term, sustainable source of transit funding to Ontario municipalities. Those receiving Gas Tax funding can use this funding

towards both transit capital and/or operating expenditures. The Gas Tax funding formula is based on a 70/30 split between ridership and population.

Funding for the gas tax program is determined by the number of litres of gasoline sold in the province during the previous year. Municipalities that support public transit services in their community receive two cents per litre of provincial gas tax revenue collected. Transit data is reported to the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) annually. The Ministry relies on municipal ridership data reported to CUTA to calculate annual Gas Tax allocations. The Gas Tax program guidelines stipulate that Gas Tax funds provided to each municipality are not to exceed 75% of municipal own spending on transit. Municipal own spending on transit includes direct contributions to capital and operating expenditures, passenger fare revenue, and donations, if applicable.

The Town receives funds from the provincial Gas Tax annually and those funds are used for the operation of LaSalle Transit. Between 2019 and 2023, the Town received an average of \$281,814 from the gas tax program. On average, in that same period, the net cost for transit service was \$225,237, which is funded through the tax levy.

The 2023-2024 provincial gas tax allocation to LaSalle was \$285,098. The net cost for the transit service in 2023 was \$344,374 (funded through the tax levy). The increase in cost is due to inflation and the rising costs of fuel.

### **Bicycle Lockers**

The Town received grant funding from the Investing in Canada Infrastructure: Public Transit Stream in 2020 to purchase and install 10 bicycle lockers on concrete pads. The bicycle lockers, which hold 2 bicycles at one time, are located near LaSalle Transit stops. The bicycle lockers, which have their own individual locks to keep the bicycles safe, help to extend the catchment area of transit passengers, giving the opportunity for those who live outside of the 400m walking zone to ride their bicycle to one of the locations, and then ride LaSalle Transit to their destination. The bicycle lockers also enhance the connection of transit stops to the Town's more than 30 KM of trails. The bicycle lockers have been installed at bus stops located at the LaSalle Civic Centre, Vollmer Complex, Wyoming Ave. at Malden Rd., Front Rd. at International St. and Windsor Crossing Outlets.

### **Route Adjustment**

Effective October 30, 2023, there was a minor route adjustment to the LaSalle Transit eastbound Route 25. The route now provides service to the Morton Industrial area by continuing westbound on Morton Drive (across Ojibway Parkway), left on the second Morton Industrial Drive, and proceed through the business area, then right onto Morton Drive.

This change provides service to the industrial area enhancing the service for passengers and eliminating the need for passengers to walk across Ojibway Parkway. Four new bus stops have been added in the Morton Industrial Area to accommodate this change.

### **Transit Windsor Enhancements**

The City of Windsor is committed to expanding and improving the transit system. In 2020, City of Windsor Council approved the Transit Master Plan. Since then, Transit Windsor has implemented changes to their system, and have some upcoming new routes, including the following:

2021 – Route 518X implemented that provides service between St. Clair College, Devonshire Mall, and Tecumseh Mall.

2023 – City Council approved Transit Windsor's 2023 service plan.

June 2023 - Route 418X implemented a semi-express route that provides service to Hôtel Dieu Grace Healthcare on Prince Rd., University of Windsor, and Tecumseh Mall.

September 1, 2024 – Introduction of Route 115. A primary route that is similar to the Dominion 5 route (Dominion 5 route is being eliminated). It is a streamlined service from Windsor International Transit Terminal to St. Clair College and will provide service in both directions for the entire route.

September 1, 2024 – Introduction of Route 305. This is a local route that provides service to residential areas of South Windsor. It starts and ends at Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare Terminal and St. Clair College Terminal.

Route 115 and route 305 are connected to the LaSalle 25 Route at St. Clair College.

### **County Routes and Connections**

LTW (Leamington to Windsor) Transit was introduced in 2019 and is a bus that travels from Leamington to Windsor with stops in Kingsville and Essex, three times daily during the week and twice on Saturdays. Fares for this service are \$10 for a one-way trip or \$15 for a round-trip (same day). The service contract was extended in 2023 for two additional years.

In 2022, the Amherstburg 605 was introduced, which runs from Amherstburg to the Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare Terminal. It operates seven days a week providing three trips daily. One stop is located in LaSalle at the Front Road/Laurier Drive bus stop. The one-way fare is \$4.75. Recently, the Town of Amherstburg committed to five additional years of this service.

Between the LTW and Amherstburg 605, riders from LaSalle have the opportunity to travel to Amherstburg, Essex, Kingsville and Leamington. This is in addition to the connections available at St. Clair College to downtown Windsor and locations like Devonshire Mall and Tecumseh Mall.

### **Transit Implementation Update**

A Transit Feasibility Study was completed in 2016. At that time, the determination was made to operate a two-bus route in LaSalle from Monday to Saturday from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm. The service was then evaluated in 2018-2019 through the Transportation and Active Transportation Master Plan. This provided a preliminary review of the current system and proposed changes to consider. These proposed changes were suggested pre-COVID with the ridership data from that time period. Since this update, there has been a substantial increase in ridership and administration has received requests for adjustments to the service.

Administration will be including a request in the 2025 budget to complete a Transit Master Plan, which will be funded from the strategic planning reserve account. The Transit Master Plan is intended to review the current service to consider future enhancements, route changes and operation run time. This process will include community consultation for consideration in the decision-making process. Starting the Master Plan Study in 2025 will allow sufficient time to consider changes before the next agreement is established.

## Consultations

Peter Marra, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

Dale Langlois, Director of Finance/Treasurer

Transit Windsor

## Financial Implications

Administration will be including a request in the 2025 budget to complete a Transit Master Plan, which will be funded from the strategic planning reserve account.

## Prepared By:



Dawn Hadre, Director of Strategy and Engagement Department

## Link to Strategic Goals

1. Enhancing organizational excellence - Not Applicable
2. Strengthen the community's engagement with the Town - Not Applicable
3. Grow and diversify the local economy - Not Applicable
4. Build on our high-quality of life - Yes
5. Sustaining strong public services and infrastructure - Yes

## Communications

Community consultation will be incorporated into the development of the Transit Master Plan.

### Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SE-03-2024 LaSalle Transit Update and Master Plan.docx
Attachments:	- LaSalle 25 Pre COVID Ridership Comparison.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Aug 5, 2024

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



Director, Strategy and Engagement

Dawn Hadre

### No Signature found

Peter Marra



Chief Administrative Officer

Joe Milicia