



REPORT

Council

TO: Mayor and Members of Council
FROM: Bruce Garrod, Regional Councillor
DATE: February 24, 2025
REPORT: BG-02/25 **FILE NO.**

SUBJECT: Status report re: Durham Region Transit in Uxbridge

BACKGROUND:

Effective public transit is important to community vitality. Townships with a relatively small population in a very large geographic area face unique challenges. The combination of schedule, and on-demand, service is the best solution. This report provides a ridership update and outlines future plans.

DISCUSSION:

Uxbridge, with a population of approximately 22,500 residents and covering over 420 square kilometers, presents unique transit challenges and opportunities. The Township's expansive geographic area requires an efficient and adaptable public transportation system to cater to both urban and rural populations. Although Uxbridge is forecasted to continue to have among the lowest population growth in the GTHA, addressing the transit needs of the urban and rural areas, including the hamlets, is essential for fostering connectivity and enhancing the quality of life for its residents.

Notable transit options in Uxbridge include Route 605, that began service in January of 2024 and facilitates local travel, while the 905 route connects Uxbridge to south Durham and offers residents essential access to neighbouring municipalities. Additionally, the availability of on-demand service enhances transit flexibility, allowing users in both urban and rural areas to request rides tailored to their specific needs. This combination of fixed routes and on-demand services helps to ensure that all residents have access to transportation, regardless of their location within the municipality.

The 605 route was implemented in response to public demand for scheduled service, ridership patterns, and to off-load the on-demand service. By providing scheduled service in higher ridership areas, capacity of the on-demand service is expanded and therefore enhances service for all of Uxbridge Township.

Ridership Data

A monthly DRT ridership report is now created and provided to Uxbridge’s Regional Councillor, who also sits on the Transit Executive Committee (TEC). The following chart reflects ridership in January 2024 (baseline) as well as the period September 2024 to January 2025.

	605 Route	905 Route	On-demand	Compared to same month 2023
Jan '24	1181	1222	1237	There were 1100 total rides in Jan '23
Sept' 24	1716	1771	727	61%
Oct' 24	2035	1594	765	29%
Nov' 24	1837	1605	832	18%
Dec' 24	1783	1370	1011	18%
2024 Total Ridership	20,914	17,674	13,582	126% year over year growth vs 2023
Jan '25	1561	1580	1158	18% vs Jan '24

The data clearly shows Durham Region Transit’s plan to improve ridership options in Uxbridge Township has been effective.

Durham Transit, 'Specialized Services', comply with the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and are consistent with industry best practices. As a public transit service provider, the trip purpose for a customer is not a factor that can be considered by DRT. Eligible Durham Transit customers can use 'Specialized Services' to access transit, based on their eligibility status. For 2024, there were 2,010 Specialized Services transit boardings. This represents 3.9% of all Uxbridge boardings. It's noteworthy that all scheduled buses, on Routes 605 and 905, provide accessibility seating for those with disabilities.

All service is provided on a first-come-first-served basis, whether that's a regular bus on a scheduled route (customers get on until the bus is full and any remaining customers wait for the next bus), or On Demand, where customers, including customers registered with specialized transit, book their trips within available DRT capacity.

5-Year Plan and Public Consultation

In January 2025, seven public consultation sessions were held in various Uxbridge locations in-person and online. These events were broadly communicated on local media. Township website/socials and with the help of Uxbridge councillors. The input received from 111 residents will be incorporated into the 5-year plan (see below) focused on continuing to enhance public transit in Uxbridge.

Further, DRT is working closely with Uxbridge's Age Friendly Advisory Committee (AFAC) to understand the unique challenges of providing reliable service to an aging community. This process, which was initiated by AFAC, was openly received by DRT management and will be held in early Q2/25. The intent is to share the effectiveness of local transit, when the time potentially comes that driving may not be the optimal mode of transportation. The forum(s) will also create opportunities for DRT to hear directly from this local demographic. Further information will be provided by AFAC/DRT when completed.

Challenges and looking forward

- Increased reliability drives increased demand which can stress service availability
 - Additional vehicles/drivers are budgeted and are being brought on-line by DRT in 2025
- Uxville industrial park businesses can be challenged to attract staff, partly due to a lack of convenient transit.
 - This is primarily a Metrolinx issue to connect to GO transit, however DRT and private providers are actively engaged in solution development

- In the next two-three years, there will be a significant increase in employment at the Uxbridge Campus of Care. IE 300+ jobs at the LTC home and more at the expanded hospital.
 - Ongoing consultation with Oak Valley Health and DRT is occurring regarding enhanced service at the campus, as well as connectivity to south Durham and York Region.

- On-demand in rural areas and hamlets is distance-challenged
 - DRT is adding additional vehicles to increase ‘accommodated rider’ rates. Monthly reporting will track the accommodated ridership rate and service provisioning will evolve.

Conclusion

Transit in Uxbridge has seen notable improvements since 2022, particularly over the past year, reflecting DRT’s commitment to enhancing mobility options for residents.

While these advancements are encouraging, there remains a need for continued development to fully address the diverse transit needs of the residents, throughout Uxbridge Township, of all ages/abilities, as well as local businesses. Durham Region transit management is actively responding to these challenges, and ensuring that future initiatives will further improve availability and convenience for all residents in Uxbridge.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Report BG-02/25 of Regional Councillor Bruce Garrod, be received for information and be shared with the General Manager of Durham Region Transit.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Regional Councillor Bruce Garrod