

**Corporate Services**

September 23, 2024

Mayor Post and Members of Council,

**Re: Fare Free Transit Program**

Please be advised that the Sustainable Orangeville Committee, at its Meeting held on August 29, 2024, approved the following resolution:

**That Sustainable Orangeville submit a letter to Council in support of the Fare Free Transit Program, and**

**That the letter be read on behalf of Sustainable Orangeville by Committee member Martina Rowley.**

**Carried.**

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The Sustainable Orangeville Committee wishes to express our support for the continuation of the Fare-Free Transit Program, which has been in effect as a two-year pilot project since 2023. We believe that extending this program aligns directly with our committee's mandate to promote sustainability, enhance livability, and improve accessibility within our community.

The Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Plan (SNAP), adopted in 2019, outlines several critical objectives that support a sustainable, healthy, and resilient Orangeville. A key component of this vision is the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, particularly from transportation. The Fare-Free Transit Program has already demonstrated significant progress toward achieving these goals, as outlined below:

## **1. Increased Ridership & Accessibility**

As per the latest data provided by Tony Dulisse, Manager of Transportation and Development in Infrastructure Services, the program has shown a substantial increase in ridership:

- Ridership has increased from approximately 100,000 riders per year in 2019 to 225,000 riders annually as of June 2024. This growth reflects a strong community adoption of public transit as a reliable transportation option.
- Notably, there has been a marked increase in bus use by youth, seniors, and individuals with accessibility challenges, making public transit more inclusive and supporting vulnerable populations within the town.

## **2. Cost Efficiency through Increased Ridership**

Higher ridership improves cost efficiency in several ways:

- With more people using the service, the fixed costs of operating the transit system—such as vehicle maintenance, fuel, and staff salaries—are spread across a greater number of users, reducing the cost per rider.
- The program has made public transit a more attractive option for many, especially for those making routine trips like grocery shopping, medical appointments, and commuting to school. This increased usage helps to maximize the efficiency of each transit trip, resulting in better utilization of resources without significantly increasing operating costs.

## **3. Supporting Town Sustainability Goals**

One of the primary objectives of the SNAP is to reduce the environmental impact of transportation. By encouraging a shift from single-occupancy vehicles to public transit, the Fare-Free Transit Program helps to:

- Reduce traffic congestion and decrease greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to the town's efforts to meet its sustainability targets.
- Promote active transportation and improve air quality, key to fostering a healthy, vibrant, and sustainable community.

#### **4. Fulfilling an Age-Friendly and Accessible Community Vision**

By making public transit a viable and accessible option for all residents, including seniors and those with mobility challenges, the program aligns with the Town's age-friendly initiatives. The committee believes that this initiative supports the creation of a more inclusive community, in line with SNAP's focus on fostering a high quality of life for all residents.

#### **5. Demonstrated Need for Public Transit**

The 2016 Transportation Survey conducted by the Town of Orangeville revealed that only 1% of trips were made using local transit. The doubling of ridership since the implementation of the Fare-Free Transit Program demonstrates its effectiveness in addressing this gap and making public transit a preferred mode of transportation for many residents.

In conclusion, we encourage Council to continue this proven success by maintaining and further supporting the Fare-Free Transit Program. By doing so, we are not only promoting sustainable transportation options but also fulfilling the mandate of Sustainable Orangeville to champion initiatives that enhance environmental stewardship, support social equity, and strengthen our town's long-term resilience.

We firmly believe that fare-free transit is an essential component of our town's future as we strive toward becoming a sustainable and inclusive community.

Sincerely,

Martina Rowley  
Member, Sustainable Orangeville Committee