

Extracted from Brent Larmer’s Report to Council on Taxi By-law Review

Transportation innovation Case Study — Innisfil Transit

(Information gathered from Staff Reports)

As part of this staff report, Municipal Staff reviewed the current situation regarding transportation within the jurisdiction of the Town of Cobourg. The reason that Town Staff provided this report to Municipal Council was not only to review the Taxicab Industry but also based on the February Council decision asking Staff to investigate the 'Shared Economy' in relation to Transportation Network Companies (ex. Uber and Lift). As part of the research and the drafting of this report, Staff went a step further and explored other existing modern and innovative options in relation to dealing with examples of transportation in other local municipalities.

In addition, Municipal Staff reviewed the numerous comments displayed and communicated by the community within the Town's Engagement Report conducted by the Town which demonstrated the need to look a bit further than the status quo. This was done by reviewing the current situation in Cobourg and looking to increase efficiency and effectiveness, for residents while reducing costs, and understanding the feasibility of implementing an alternative approach to transportation with the current demographic based on local demand for greater, consistent and reliable transportation options.

Below is a brief summary of the Town of Innisfil and their ability to change their way of thinking when considering operating public transportation within the community. The Town of Innisfil partnered with Uber (for general rides) and local taxi companies (for accessible rides) to bring a reliable, affordable on-demand transit service to serve all residents of Innisfil.

Below is a brief comparison of Cobourg and Innisfil.

Cobourg vs. Innisfil

Cobourg		Innisfil	
Population	19,440	Population	36,566
Density	139.2/km ² (361/sq mi)	Density	869.3/km ² (2,251/sq mi)

In September of 2015, the Town of Innisfil completed a Transit Feasibility Study for the municipality. This study was conducted due to there being no public transit system in the community and the community was demanding a solution to help citizens get around as an alternative option to Taxis. The study recommended that the Town consider a fixed-route bus service to address the current demand for public transit in Innisfil. However, when Innisfil Council considered the options of the report for fixed-route bus service during their Budget deliberations, it was determined that all options would be too costly for the limited level of service that they would provide. As a result, Council directed Staff to form a community advisory committee to assist with further assessing demand-responsive transit solutions. The

goal of the committee was to consider and try to achieve an "adaptable", "progressive" and "innovative" solution to efficiently address the public transit demand in Innisfil.

On June 15, 2016, Innisfil Council gave Staff direction to issue a Request for Expressions of Interest to solicit information from proponents to provide on-demand-responsive transit services in Innisfil. The purpose was to gauge interest and assess options from proponents interested in providing this service.

From the submissions that the Town received from proponents, Uber emerged as the only company with an app-based platform (i.e. UberPool) that would facilitate ridesharing and the matching of two (2) or more passengers on trips across the entire Town.

Instead of transit buses working regular routes, the municipality engaged Uber in a Partnership Agreement to allow travelling cars to function as the transit fleet. When a rider opens the Uber app, within the Town of Innisfil jurisdiction, Innisfil Transit pops up as the cheapest option to travel between networks of popular areas called "hubs", such as libraries, the recreation centre or municipal buildings.

As part of the project that Innisfil undertook in addressing immediate transit needs, the Town structured the program in a Staged approach in order to generate the long term success of the program. The main purposes of Stage 1 was to collect data on the demand for transit in Innisfil and to see how the service is being used. The Town felt that the use of UberPool is best aligned with the focus of Stage 1 of the service to retrieve data on the key origin and destination points for transit in Innisfil. In this type of a transit system, the Town was not required to pay capital costs for items such as buses and bus shelters, in addition to the ongoing operational and maintenance costs. Rather, the Town simply provided funding to cover or contribute to the difference between the Uber fare and a traditional bus transit fare (e.g. \$4-6).

Stage two (2) of Innisfil Transit was launched in 2018, which had a number of recommendations that were results of staff observations as well as a Community Consultation process through engagement surveys. The additions to Stage 2 were a demand for more flat fee destinations (similar to transit stops) to be utilized on the Innisfil Transit App.

What is the fare to use the service?

People are able to book a trip wherever they need to go, 24 hours a day/7 days a week. There are three different types of trips that can be taken:

- 1) Key Destination Request: When a trip is booked from within Innisfil to one of the following destinations, the passenger will pay \$4-\$6 (one-way):
- 2) Custom Destination Request: A \$5 discount has applied to other trips within Innisfil boundaries that are not going to/from the above flat fare destinations.
- 3) Accessible Vehicle Request: residents will be able to request a wheelchair accessible vehicle through a local Taxi company. The price of this trip follows the same fare structure as for the Uber trips.

Current Ridership Numbers from the Town of Innisfil:

Over 112,000 Innisfil Transit trips have been taken since the service was launched in May 2017. Statistics Overview: (Provided by March 2019 Innisfil Staff Report)

	2017 (May 15 – Dec)	2018 (Jan – Dec)
Trips	26,688	85,943
Subsidy	\$150K	\$640K
Riders	3,493	5,749
Drivers	1,393	2,203
Match Rate	17%	31%
Wait Time	9:10 mins	6:10 mins
Completion Rate	71%	87%

Overall, the results in this table are reflecting the success and popularity of the Innisfil Transit service. Particularly, the ridesharing match rate (when 2 or more trips are matched) and completion rate (% of requested trips that are completed) continue to trend upwards, while the average wait time continues to trend downwards as the average wait time was under 5 minutes in the last 3 months of 2018. These trends are reflecting both the efficiency and reliability of the Innisfil Transit service. *(Provided by March 2019 Innisfil Staff Report)*

It should be noted that zero accessible rides were completed in 2017 or 2018 using the partnering taxi company. The Canadian Red Cross provides a transportation service in the Innisfil area for persons with disabilities so it was concluded that riders were either managing to use the Uber vehicles or were utilizing the Red Cross service (perhaps a cheaper or more direct option).

Funding:

A total of \$100,000 was approved by Council for the purposes of implementing demand responsive transit in the Budget for 2017, while an additional amount of \$125,000 was approved for 2018. Innisfil Transit was approximately \$250,000 over budget in 2018 due to a higher growth rate than staff predicted as well fares starting off at a lower amount to offset the cost to increase the popularity of the system and promote the use of the service. In the 2019 budget, Council approved \$885,806 for Innisfil Transit.

Without any changes to Innisfil Transit fares, Staff are anticipating total costs are likely to be in the \$1-1.2 million range for 2019 due to the popularity and growth of the service, along with the Town's growing population (approximately 1,000 new residents each year). In anticipation of the increasing costs, ride fares were increased in 2019 and the number of rides per month were capped at 30 after which time the rider has to pay full fare for additional rides.

Although these costs are starting to exceed what was forecast for the 1-bus or 2-bus route options in the Town's Transit Feasibility Study prepared in 2015, the ridesharing transit system is able to provide convenient door-to-door coverage across the entire Town. In contrast, the

bus service only provides access to those within walking distance of the bus stops along the route and wait times can sometimes be up to an hour.

There are options for this type of service to be funded based on the above description of the partnership program which could be considered identical to that of the Town of Cobourg's current Transit System. Budget requirements can be funded from the Municipal Levy or through the Provincial Gas Tax Funds that currently the Town receives, which is allocated to municipalities based on a formula that looks at prior year results and a 70/30 split between ridership and total population. Eligible funding is capped at 75% of municipal spending.

Considerations:

There are many additional considerations that Council should be aware of when considering a case study such as this one when it comes to the implementation of such a program. Below is a list of those considerations:

- Driver/Vehicles
- Partnerships
- Passengers
- Network/Technology
- Incentives
- Education/Promotion
- Existing Infrastructure
- Accessibility

Conclusion:

The Town of Innisfil has provided a transportation system that has met the needs of their residents by implementing a new way of operating a public transportation system. The partnership with Uber has provided a convenient door-to-door service that is available to everyone 24/7 and the results of Innisfil Transit are confirming that the cost of a fixed-route bus system to service all of Innisfil would have been far greater and a less convenient option than through the current ridesharing transit service.

If Municipal Council would like to consider Staff investigating this ridesharing partnership option, Council should direct Staff to provide a detailed report and analysis comparing the current system that is in place (Public Transit, Taxi Services and other transportation networks) to determine if the market, public interest, cost analysis and feasibility based on demographic is an option for consideration.