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**TO:** INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITY INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

**SUBJECT:** BARRIE TRANSIT'S 2025 NETWORK SERVICE ADJUSTMENTS

**WARD:** ALL

**PREPARED BY AND KEY CONTACT:** J. ZIMMERMAN, SUPERVISOR OF TRANSIT OPERATIONS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

**SUBMITTED BY:** B. FORSYTH, DIRECTOR OF TRANSIT AND PARKING STRATEGY

**GENERAL MANAGER APPROVAL:** R. JAMES-REID, GENERAL MANAGER OF ACCESS BARRIE

**CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER APPROVAL:** M. PROWSE, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

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**RECOMMENDED MOTION**

1. That the second phase of the New Transit Network currently approved for implementation in 2025 by motion 23-G-133 adopted by City Council on June 21, 2023, be revised to the following 2025 service adjustments, creating the 2025 Transit Network (as per Appendix A attached to Report of Infrastructure and Community Investment Committee dated November 13, 2024). And that the timing of the adjustments be approved as listed here:
  - a) Route 2 and Transit ON Demand (TOD) Zone G Adjustments in the first quarter of 2025.
  - b) Route 8 and TOD Zones A and B Adjustments in the third quarter of 2025, to align with the opening of the Barrie Allandale Transit Terminal.
  - c) Route 8 Adjustments to new Terminal in the third quarter of 2025, to align with the opening of the Barrie Allandale Transit Terminal.
  - d) Implementation of New Zones E, F and H as TOD Zones, to align with the delivery of the additional buses.

**PURPOSE & BACKGROUND**

2. The New Transit Network was approved in June of 2023 (motion #23-G-133) with a planned phase approach in 2024 and 2025.
3. Phase One of the New Transit Network was implemented in the Spring of 2024. This phase of the project involved existing conventional transit route adjustments, the implementation of conventional transit routes (Routes 12 and 400), and the conversion of low ridership areas to Transit ON Demand (TOD) service.
4. The current productivity of each conventional transit route is provided in **Table 1**. The city's Transit Service Guidelines recommend a minimum of 8 boardings per hour to consider conventional transit service and 3 boards per hour to consider TOD service.

Conventional Transit Route (#)	Boardings Per Hour
100/101	51
8	33
10/11	32
12	26
7	23
2	18
400	17

**Table 1: Barrie Transit Conventional Route Productivity**

5. All the city's conventional transit route's have a high level of productivity, especially routes 100/101 with over 50 boards an hour. The new Route 400 express route that utilizes the Highway 400 connecting the north and south ends of the city, is building a strong base level of riders. As with any new route, it takes time for the ridership to grow, and staff are expecting continued growth as rider travel trends mature and intensification is realized.
  
6. The TOD service is proving to be efficient at providing transit service coverage in low ridership demand areas. For the TOD zones, the service has an on-time performance of 90% and a user rating of 4.3 stars out of 5 stars. The boardings per hour for the TOD zones is provided in **Table 2**. The boardings per hour is highest in Zone G, which mainly services the Pringle and Sproule neighbourhood. When TOD boardings per hour increase near to the minimum of 8 boardings per hour, staff would explore conventional transit routing options for all or part of a zone.

Zone	Boardings Per Hour
A	1.5
B	1.2
*C	1.3
*D	5.4
G	6.6
*Indicates a zone where buses can be shared to distribute service demand with adjacent zones	

**Table 2: TOD Zone Boardings Per Hour (Weekdays September 2024)**

7. Ongoing construction projects have caused service delays and have impacted the reliability of both the new and existing conventional transit routes. These construction projects have increased transit detours by nearly 50% in comparison to previous years. Projects such as Essa Road and the Dunlop Street Highway 400 bridge replacement works or projects in areas around the city's downtown core have had and are expected to continue to have the largest impact on transit service reliability.
  
8. Following the implementation of phase one, there has been numerous construction projects (including the closure and partial closures of Bayview Drive) that have impacted Route 12's on-time performance, where the schedule has needed to be adjusted to compensate for the extra travel time.

9. It is common to make service adjustments after making a larger network change. With monitoring trending feedback throughout Phase One, some minor service adjustments were required, which include the following:
- **Adjustments TOD service Zone C for June 24th** - to enable users to book trips directly to the Painswick Library and the Huronia Medical Clinic.
  - **Additional bus stops added to all TOD Zones through July/August** - to improve the passenger pick up times by enabling TOD buses to approach passengers from multiple directions.
  - **Adjusted Route 8 for August 6<sup>th</sup>** - for this route to directly service the Huronia Medical Clinic to meet with trending feedback related to riders having a difficult time getting to this location.
  - **Parameters added to TOD software September 9<sup>th</sup>** - to improve efficiencies and user bookings.
  - **Schedule adjustments to Route 2, 12 and 400 September 9<sup>th</sup>** - to accommodate impacts from construction.
  - **Adjusted the TOD Zone D October 7<sup>th</sup>** - to no longer provide TOD services on roadways covered by a conventional transit route where service was added back onto Churchill Drive and Huronia Road.

## ANALYSIS

10. **2025 Transit Network Development:** The proposed service adjustments, contained within this report, involved reviewing trending public and bus operator feedback, trending issues, data analysis, service alignment, and city growth.
- **Feedback:** Through a review of trending feedback there were a few main areas for the revised service adjustments. The first was related to areas with lower ridership that were converted to TOD, where some users adjusting to the new service model, have requested the return of conventional service. Second was related to schedule reliability of certain conventional bus routes with heavy impacts from construction projects along transit corridors.
  - **Construction Impacts:** With construction projects becoming more widespread along transit service corridors throughout the city the data is showing that maintaining a reliable conventional transit service is a challenge. When on-time performance becomes harder to achieve it leads to frustration among the transit service users and inefficiencies in the system. Building reliability in the conventional transit service is important to the success of the service. The impact of these projects makes it challenging to launch new conventional transit routes and establish consistent and reliable schedules.
  - **Service Alignment:** With the new Barrie Allandale Transit Terminal project completion sighted for mid-2025, the City's main connection point will shift from the Downtown Transit Terminal to the new terminal
  - **Transit ON Demand (TOD) Service:** Adjustments required from the original design of the service zones to meet with increased ridership and rider travel patterns. TOD buses are shared between zones, and ridership growth or increased service demand is distributed between zones that are adjacent to each other. However, if ridership increases in a zone that is isolated, like Zone G, this ridership distribution cannot so easily be accommodated, and alternative service options need to be investigated.

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- **Changing Customer Travel:** With 2025 being a time when the city's residents will be experiencing a greater level of change with the move of the transit terminal to Allandale, performing larger changes to the transit network could add unnecessary complexities to their lives potentially leading to added confusion and service dissatisfaction. Investigating how staff can minimize change and continue to provide a reliable service ensures these residents can utilize the transit services and have a better service experience.
  - **City Growth:** With new housing developments in the Salem and Hewitts areas of the city, the TOD service zones require adjustments as well as the addition of new zones for the new development areas (as approved as part of the City's 2024 Business Plan & Budget).
11. Due to the reasons listed above, staff recommend proceeding with the following service adjustments in 2025 rather than moving forward with the second phase of the New Transit Network plan. The 2025 Transit Network service adjustments provide a more flexible, immediate response to current conditions and will help to ensure that the transit services can operate reliably and minimize disruptions for users.
  12. Through the experience from the 2024 service changes, launching new routes and then immediately having to put them into a construction detour creates an added layer of complexity and dissatisfaction to the riders. First riders adjust to the changes in the transit service network, then they must adjust to how detours will once again impact their transit service needs. With the highway 400 crossing at Dunlop Street impacting travel next year and Bayfield Street highway crossing scheduled in the future, it may be better to implement larger service adjustments in a year where the main transit corridor's will not be heavily impacted.
  13. **2025 Transit Network Service Adjustments:** Below are the proposed service adjustments that staff are recommending throughout 2025:
    - a) **Route 2 Adjustment and removal of TOD Zone G:**
      - i. This involves an adjustment to the existing Route 2's schedule and route pattern to service the Pringle and Sproule neighbourhood. Coverage currently provided by TOD service in Zone G would be added to Route 2 as displayed in **Figure 1**. The boardings per hour for Zone G has increased and are trending upwards, where ridership has grown from an average of approximately 4 boardings per hour in previous years to an average of 6.6 boardings per hour in 2024. Through ongoing public engagement, Zone G is also currently receiving the highest level of feedback related to requesting conventional transit service in place of TOD. This zone is trending towards the city's service guidelines of 8 boardings per service hour, supporting the requirement to transition this area to a conventional transit route. Zone G is an isolated zone; therefore, it is an operational challenge for multiple TOD buses to service this zone to improve the TOD service zones reliability.
      - ii. This adjustment can be made in isolation of the other changes, and staff are recommending implementing the change in the first quarter of 2025.

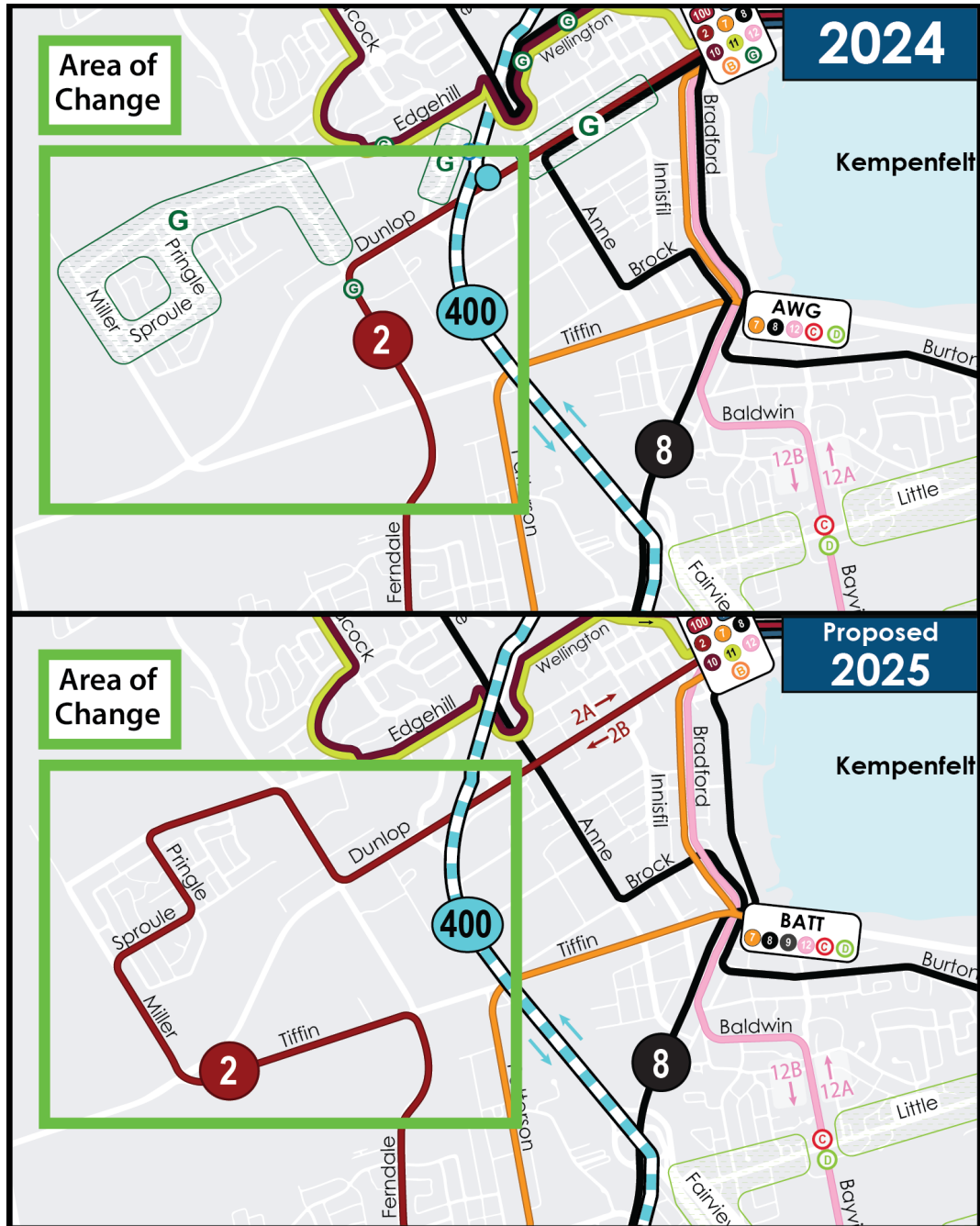


Figure 1: Route 2 Adjustment and removal of TOD Zone G

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b) **Route 8 and TOD Zone A and B Adjustments:**

- i. Displayed in **Figure 2**. The proposed Route 8 and TOD Zone A & B adjustments focus on distributing service demand, removing TOD from areas that are covered by a conventional transit route and adding a portion of a conventional transit route.
- ii. There would be an adjustment made to Route 8 on the Livingstone Street East, St. Vincent Street, Springdale Drive and Cundles Street East area of the city. As routes 10, 11, 100 and 101 service both Livingstone and St. Vincent Street, removing Route 8 from servicing that area would be a low impact change, to an area that already have multiple conventional routes. This would involve adding the conventional transit service Route 8 onto Springdale Drive and part of Cundles Road East.
- iii. Also, with the change in the plan to maintain conventional transit service on roadways like parts of Kozlov, Steel, Blake Streets, or, in areas near to a conventional bus route like on Wellington Street East at St. Vincent Street, the TOD service Zones "A" and "B" would be adjusted to remove duplicate service areas covered by or near to a conventional transit service route.
- iv. The original plan for 2025 was to include TOD service in the Benson Drive neighbourhood. Once the above changes are made staff would monitor and investigate if there was capacity within Zone "A" to extend the service to the Benson Drive area.
- v. As this includes a change to Route 8, to align public communications and education, staff are recommending completing this change with the Route 8 Adjustment listed below, which will align with the new Barrie Allandale Transit Terminal.

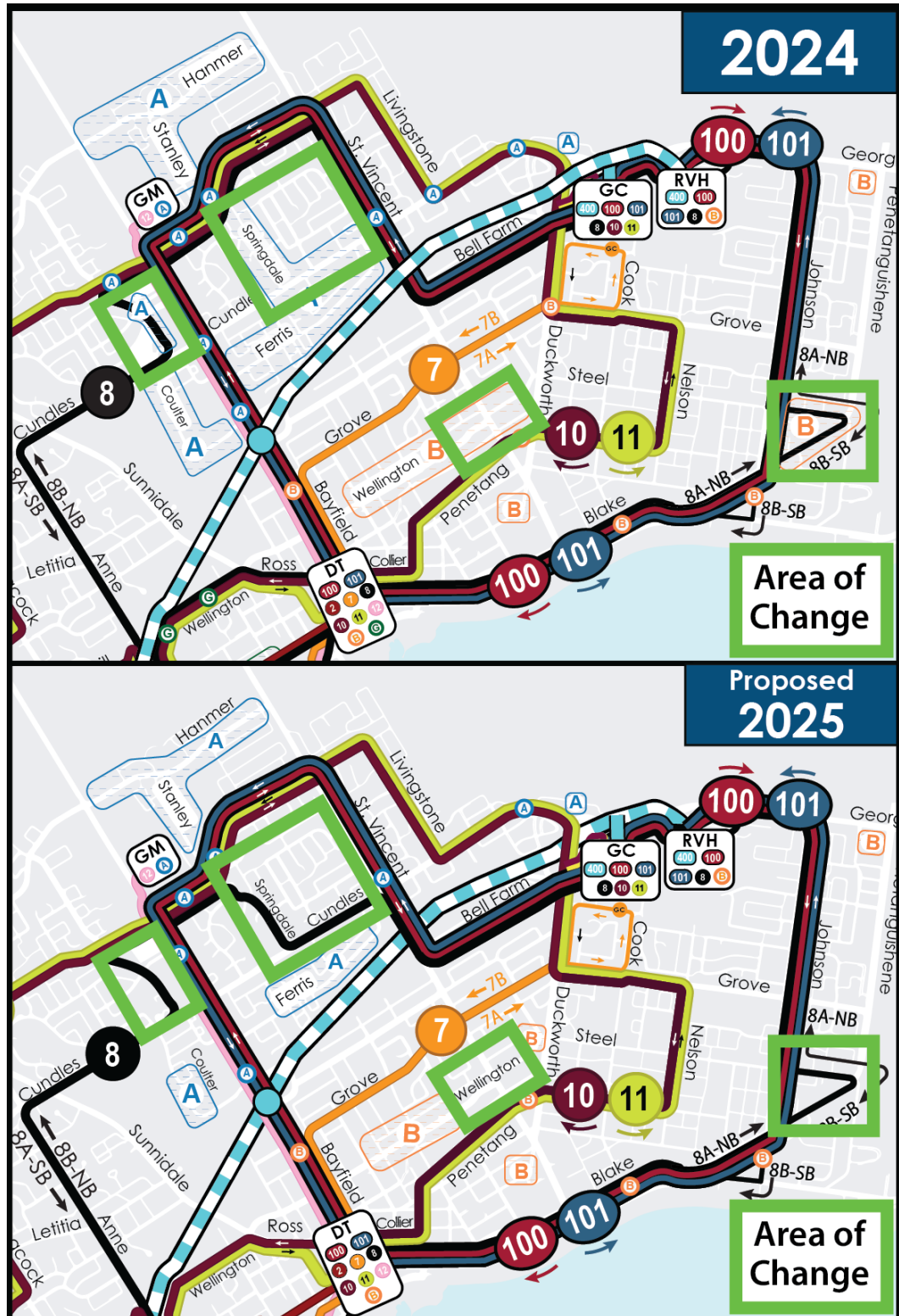
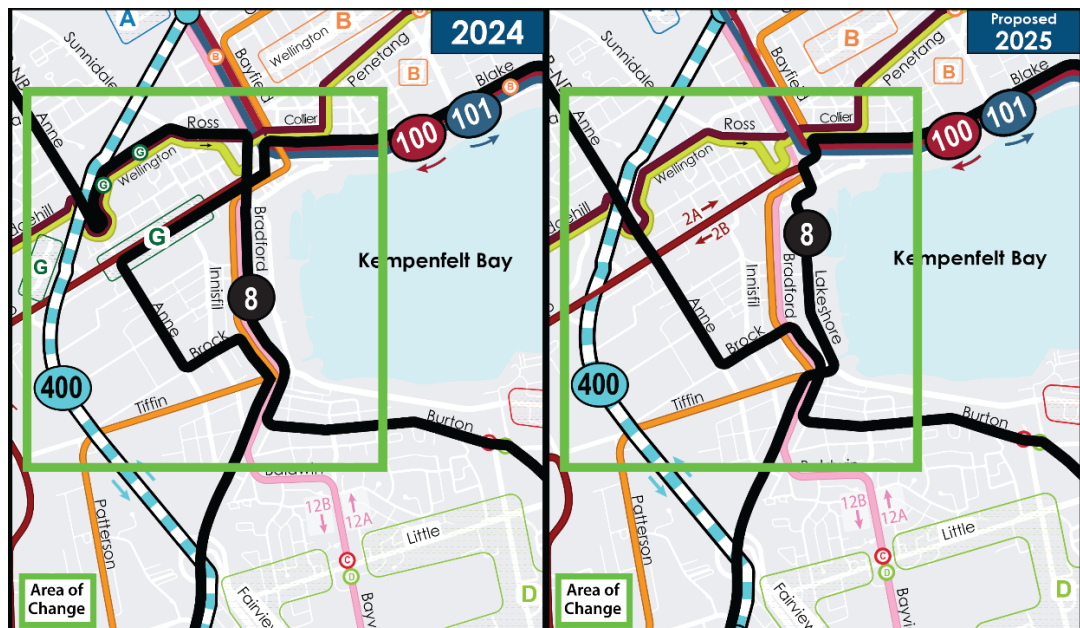


Figure 2: Route 8 and TOD Zone Adjustments

**c) Route 8 Adjustment:**

- i. Displayed in **Figure 3**. This proposed service change would adjust Route 8 so that it better aligns with the relocation of the terminal. Route 8 operates in a figure eight route pattern with the main cross point at the downtown terminal. For network connectivity this main cross point of the route needs to be at the location of the new terminal to accommodate both city and intercity service connections.
- ii. At peak service times Route 8 is serviced by ten conventional transit buses, having the main cross point at the new terminal provides a safe location for the layovers of all these buses. This change to Route 8 will make this route more direct and it will add new coverage onto Lakeshore Drive.
- iii. After the 2024 service changes and through public engagement staff received trending positive public feedback on maintaining Route 8. Riders prefer this route because of its connectivity and large coverage area. With its popularity it is best to perform phased low impact changes to this route in the future and hence why staff are recommending keeping this route and not remove it as originally contemplated in Phase 2.
- iv. Adding Route 8 to directly service Lakeshore Drive will provide a direct transit travel option to riders serviced by Route 8 enabling them to get to the city's waterfront. With direct transit travel from all corners of the city this could help encourage more residents to utilize transit and reducing the impact on parking around the waterfront.
- v. This adjustment will need to be completed in alignment with the opening of the new Barrie Allandale Transit Terminal, currently planned for the third quarter of 2025.



**Figure 3: Route 8 Adjustment**



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d) **New TOD Service Zones E, F and H:**

- i. As previously approved as part of the city's 2024 business plan and budget, this service adjustment would mainly involve implementing the TOD service in the Salem and Hewitt's areas, as illustrated in **Figure 4**.
- ii. One of the main benefits with the flexibility of the TOD service model is its ability to grow in alignment with new development areas. It can be challenging to offer a full fixed route service early on in these growth areas, as ridership is low, and infrastructure may not support full size buses in the initial years. Having transit services available earlier, in these areas of growth, will further support residents who require the service from the first day they move in.
- iii. The new TOD Zone F would be built to cover the south coverage area of the current TOD Zone D. This would be done to better distribute the ridership, meet with rider travel patterns and reduce the service demand on Zone D.
- iv. These zones would be adjusted and added to align with the delivery of the new buses that were ordered to accommodate this TOD service expansion, currently scheduled for delivery in the third quarter of 2025.

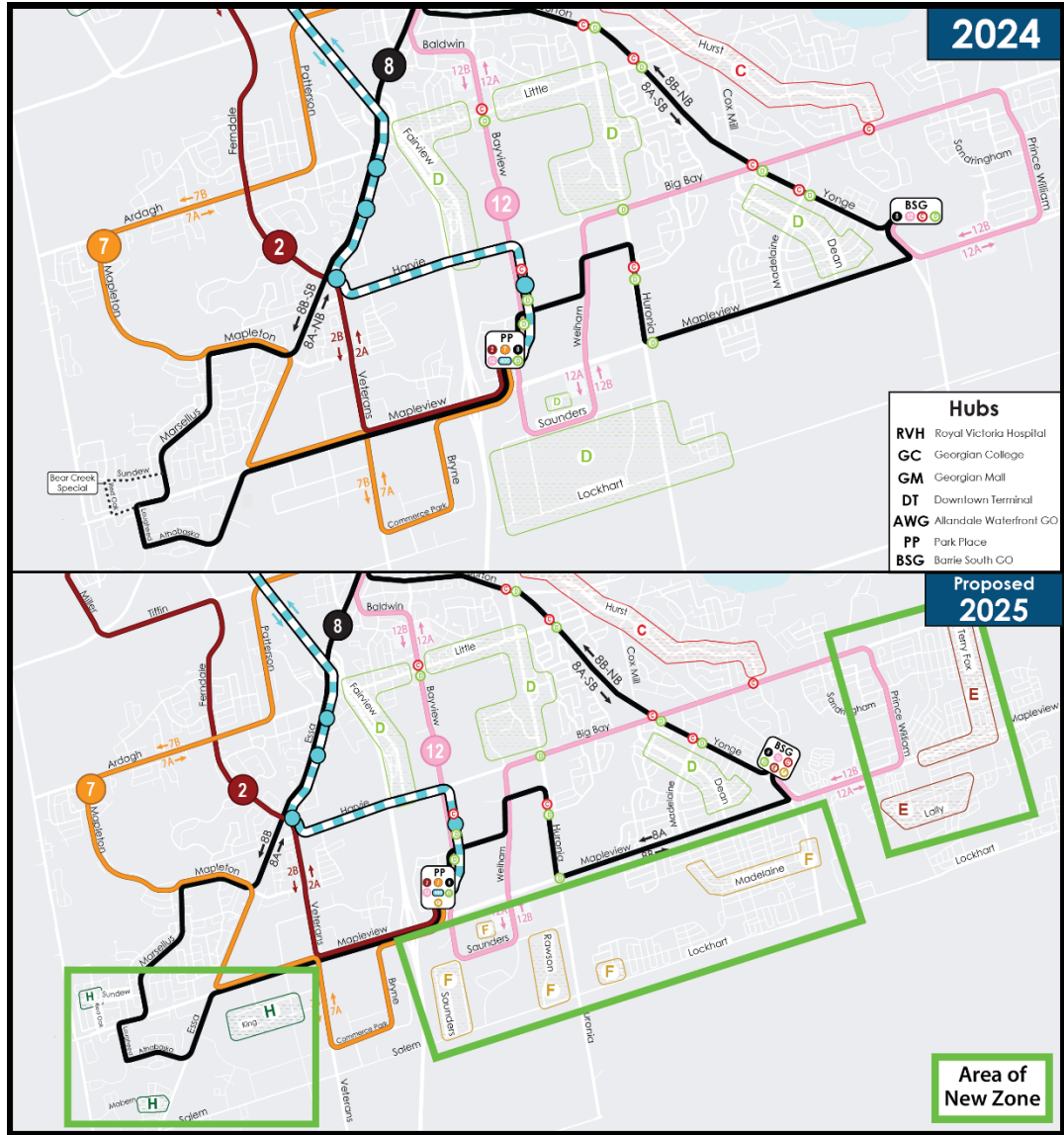


Figure 4: New TOD Service Zones E, F and H

14. **Public Education Plan:** Although minor, the 2025 service adjustments will change some of the transit customer's daily travel plans. Increased feedback volumes during the initial transition of each service adjustment can be expected. To ease the transition, transit staff will implement a comprehensive customer-focused Public Education Plan.
15. **Community Outreach:** Staff will also be conducting community outreach prior to making the proposed service adjustments outlined in this staff report. Educational materials would be prepared, and feedback would be collected, with a summary of that feedback provided to council, via a memo, prior to implemented the proposed changes.

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### **ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS**

16. There are no environmental matters related to the recommendations.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

17. There is an alternative available for consideration by General Committee:

#### **Alternative #1**

General Committee could choose not to approve the proposed 2025 Transit Network service adjustments and continue to implement Phase Two of the New Transit Network.

This alternative is not recommended as through the service adjustments that were made in Spring of 2024 (the first phase of the New Transit Network) it was found that with the higher number of construction projects throughout the city in 2024, 2025 and ongoing on arterial roadways. The service delays from these projects make it difficult to launch new reliable conventional transit service routes. As reliability is one of the pillars for a measurement of success as the city works towards the Vision for Transit.

### **FINANCIAL**

18. The 2025 Transit Network has been built to maintain operational cost neutrality with similar operating hours.

### **LINKAGE TO 2022-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN**

19. The recommendation(s) included in this Staff Report support the following goals identified in the 2022 to 2026 Strategic Plan:
- Make it easier to move around the city.
  - Financial stewardship which includes finding efficiencies and innovation

**APPENDIX A**

**Barrie Transit Network Map**

