

Staff Memorandum



To: Mayor A. Nuttall and Members of Council

Subject and Ward(s): Barrie Transit and School Board Partnership Program Updates

Date: February 26, 2025

Department Head Approval: B. Forsyth, Director of Transit and Parking Strategy

Executive Management Approval: R. James-Reid, General Manager of Access Barrie

CAO Approval: M. Prowse, Chief Administrative Officer

The purpose of this Memorandum is to provide Council with an update on current partnership programs between Barrie Transit and local school boards, including the high school pilot program currently being implemented in partnership with Barrie Transit and the Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB), as well as the Barrie Transit Field Trip Pass Program.

Over the past several months, Barrie Transit has been working with the SCDSB to develop and implement a pilot program aimed at increasing student access to public transit (per Council Direction 24-A-076). The program, referred to as the Service Mirroring Pilot Program, provides students within a designated school bus serviced area with free Barrie Transit passes for the 2024-25 school year.

City staff, in collaboration with the SCDSB, evaluated multiple potential pilot areas and schools before finalizing the current pilot zone. The selected area, illustrated in Appendix A, encompasses a specific neighborhood identified by SCDSB, with 109 eligible high school students residing within the green-highlighted zone. These students would receive free transit passes to be used at anytime over the school year to travel throughout the City on Barrie Transit.

While participating students retain access to traditional school board-provided transportation as outlined in SCDSB's policies, this pilot program allows both the City and SCDSB to monitor how students utilize public transit as a supplementary or alternative option for potential future funding and partnership programs.

There were several initial challenges with the program launch due to changing Board policy and student sign-ups, which hindered the initial progress of the pilot. Barrie Transit has provided students with transit materials and in-person travel training. These efforts were designed to familiarize students with the public transit system and

encourage its use. Here are the current stats of the pilot program:

Eligible: 110 students

Usage: 21 unique riders and 318 rides completed (September 2024 to January 2025)

City staff will continue to monitor the program's progress and collaborate with SCDSB to drive additional participation and identify areas for improvement. This includes exploring the potential expansion of the pilot program to include Maple Ridge Secondary School as a means to drive additional participation for the pilot phase. Preliminary analysis indicates that the pilot area could be expanded without adversely affecting public transit capacity or the experience of current participants. The results of the pilot will inform decisions regarding future programs.

The Barrie Transit Field Trip Pass program has also continued to display very positive growth and excellent engagement as an introduction to transit for local school aged youth. The Barrie Transit Field Trip Pass Program offers Barrie elementary and high schools a convenient and cost-free way to transport students and teachers on educational outings. Each pass allows a class of up to 30 students and 5 adults to ride any Barrie Transit service, making it easier for schools to plan field trips without the expense of charter buses.

Participation has increased to include 46 schools from the SCDSB, Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board, CS Viamonde, CSC Mon Avir, and several private schools. The program also supports other City initiatives such as Barrie Fire's Grade 7 & 8 Fire Safety Field Trip Program and Recreation's Swim to Survive program.

Field Trip Pass Program Participants and Usage

2022 – 24 participating schools – 515 trips

2023/24 – 37 participating schools – 1233 trips

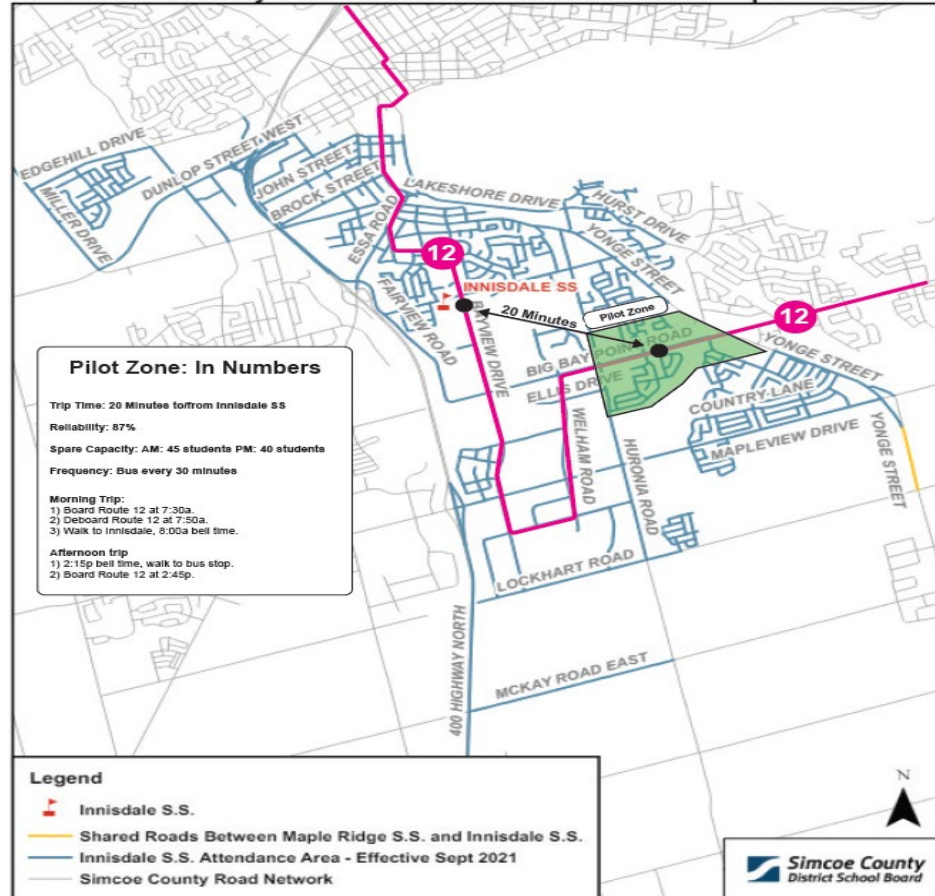
2024/25 – 46 participating schools - 419 trips (school year to date)

By fostering partnerships between the City and local schools, this program represents a promising step toward creating sustainable, accessible, and student-centered transportation solutions.

Appendix:

Appendix A –

Innisdale Secondary School Attendance Area - Effective September 2021



Memo Author:

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File #:

Pending # (if applicable):