



## TRANSIT AND PARKING STRATEGY MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** MAYOR J. LEHMAN AND MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

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

**NOTED:** R. JAMES-REID, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ACCESS BARRIE

**RE:** BARRIE TRANSIT UPDATE

**DATE:** JUNE 22, 2020

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The purpose of this Memorandum is to provide members of Council with an update on Barrie Transit services including service planning and resumption of fare collections.

At the beginning and throughout the COVID pandemic, transit agencies around the country put various precautionary measures in place to maintain service for essential travel. Some of the main measures that Barrie Transit has adopted include:

- Additional Communication and Educational campaign on various precautionary measures
- Enhanced sanitization practices
- PPE provided to transit employees
- Rear door boarding and the temporary suspension of paid transit services
- Restricting passenger capacity limits to 15 passengers per conventional vehicle and taping off every other seat
- Installation of hand sanitizer units on transit vehicles
- Investigation into the installation of protective driver barriers

In response to the pandemic, and with the provincial legislation to close schools and businesses, Barrie Transit had experienced a reduction in ridership to as low as 25% of its regular ridership. As a result, Barrie Transit had reduced its service hours to approximately 65% of its regular service levels. It would be difficult to reduce any further, as this maintains the minimal service level to maintain the base coverage area for the entire City. At the time of preparing this memo ridership was trending upwards and was approximately 33% of regular ridership.

Even though ridership is at a fraction of its regular operations, the current restrictions limiting capacity to a maximum of 15 passengers per bus has resulted in denying passengers. These restrictions limit the capacity on buses by approximately 75%.

In response to these capacity issues, the City has implemented a floater bus program. This program has staged 4 additional buses throughout the City that can be quickly deployed into service to pick up passengers abandoned at stops and finish the route to get them to their destination. This is not an ideal solution as it still poses issues with getting individuals to their destination on time.

In May, as per the guidance of the Ministry of Health, Barrie Transit began an educational campaign recommending the use of face coverings to passengers while riding transit. In recent weeks, some transit agencies are beginning to move towards making masks mandatory to help build consumer confidence in their service, as well as a means to increase capacity limits on the buses.

With reducing the service by 35% and further limiting capacity by 75%, this poses significant challenges to provide sufficient service for essential travel. Compounded with the provincial guidelines of reopening the economy, this is a challenge that all transit agencies are experiencing across the country and looking at various ways to mitigate the issues.



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When front door boarding resumes, this will allow the service to increase its capacity by approximately 4 passengers per bus. Front door boarding will also allow the operations to return to paid services, where the expectation is that there will be a reduction of the current ridership, as imposing fares will further support the prioritization for essential travel.

Currently free transit has been offered to July 2<sup>nd</sup>. As further guidance has been provided by all levels of government, some transit agencies are making plans to return to paid service in various forms and timelines.

There are two key additional deliverables that Barrie Transit will need to have in place prior to resuming front door boarding and returning to paid transit services:

1. Installation of protective driver barriers
2. Reopening of the Transit Terminal to sell fare products

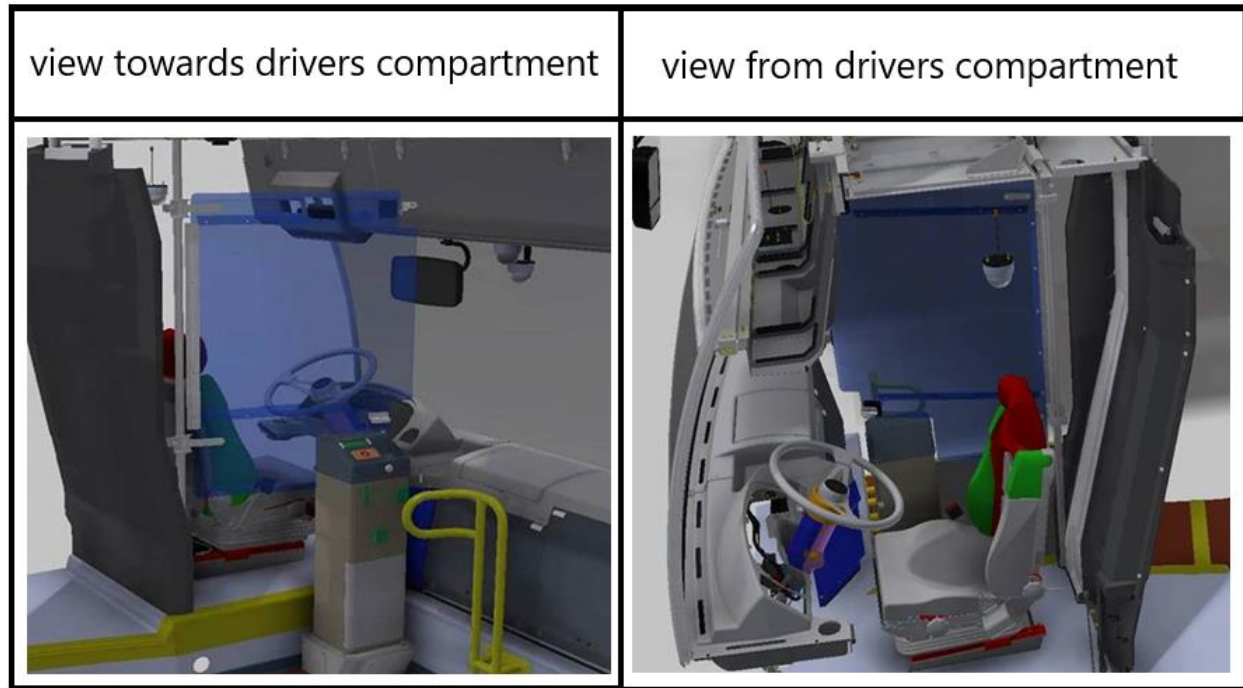
As many transit agencies are required to install these protective barriers prior to returning to front door boarding, obtaining this product is becoming difficult and causing delays in production and installation. Fortunately, Barrie Transit has sourced these barriers from a reputable company. As this is a brand-new product to the market, the company has been working with both their engineering and legal departments to ensure the product will meet transportation guidelines. Our original timelines had the barriers installed and ready to return to front door boarding by July 2<sup>nd</sup>. With the additional approvals we are now scheduled to have them installed by mid-July. Appendix "A" is a conceptual image of the protective barriers.

When the transit terminal is reopened, it will operate differently than it did pre-pandemic. Additional resources will be required to assist with limiting the number of patrons within the facility for fare product purchase and the potential use of washroom facilities. Those restrictions will be maintained, reviewed, and updated to align with the ongoing provincial guidelines with reopening the economy. The terminal will be opened approximately 1 week ahead of reinstating transit fares to provide riders the opportunity to purchase fare products.

Staff will work towards returning to front door boarding and paid service by the middle of July however we will need to continue to remain flexible amidst new information. We commit to informing the public 2 weeks ahead of time and providing an update to members of Council as details are finalized as we move closer to this target date.

If paid transit services resume mid-month, the cost of a monthly transit pass will be pro-rated based on the number of days remaining in the month. To limit the transmission of COVID-19, the use of multi-ride cards will be temporarily suspended. The use of a ride card requires the operator and passenger to transfer and touch a paper fare media product. In the meantime, staff are investigating alternative options to the ride cards. Riders will still be able to pay cash fares at the farebox on the vehicles and purchase monthly passes from the terminal.

APPENDIX "A"



**Note:** The protective barrier will be clear. The blue color used in the image is to clearly highlight the coverage area.