

Staff Report

Report To: City Council
Report From: Heidi Jennen, Supervisor of Environmental Services
Meeting Date: July 27, 2026
Report Code: OP-26-039
Subject: Continuation of Guelph Owen Sound Transit (GOST) Post August 31, 2026

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report OP-26-039 respecting the continuation of Guelph Owen Sound Transit (GOST) after August 31, 2026, City Council directs staff to bring forward by-laws to execute the:

1. Amending agreement for the operation of the inter-community transportation service as outlined in the report;
2. Amending agreements with the respective property owners of the bus stop locations as outlined in the report; and
3. Amending Funding agreement with the County of Grey as outlined in the report.

Highlights:

- Grey County has requested that GOST continue operating to avoid service disruptions while regional transit discussions and planning efforts continue.
- Suspending GOST could negatively impact existing riders and undermine the ridership and public confidence established over several years of successful operation.
- Any continuation of GOST will be subject to Grey County fully funding all operating costs and the completion of any required agreements and approvals.

Vision 2050 - Strategic Plan Alignment:

[Strategic Plan](#) Priority: A City that Moves – Facilitating sustainable transportation options and creating community connectivity.

Previous Report/Authority:

[CR-23-028](#) – Approval of Contract Extension – Operation of Inter-Community Transportation Service

[OP-24-008](#) – The Future of Guelph to Owen Sound Transit (GOST)

[CR-25-037](#) - Approval of Contract Extension – Operation of Inter-Community Transportation Service

[OP-26-001](#) – Continuation of Guelph Owen Sound Transit (GOST) post March 31, 2026

Background:

Following Council's approval to continue operating GOST until August 31, 2026, Grey County has continued to advance its Regional Transit Study, which is exploring opportunities for a unified regional transit network across Grey, Bruce, Wellington, and Dufferin Counties.

As part of this work, Grey County continues to engage with the Province and municipal partners to evaluate long-term regional transit opportunities and determine how existing services, including GOST Transit, may be incorporated into a future regional transportation model.

Grey County has requested that the City continue operating GOST beyond August 31, 2026, to ensure uninterrupted service while regional transit discussions continue. While progress continues on the Regional Transit Study, a final decision regarding a unified regional transit network has not yet been made, and no definitive implementation timeline has been established.

Grey County has advised that its preferred approach would be to extend the service until a decision is made by the participating Counties regarding a unified regional transit network.

Analysis and Options:

GOST has been operating successfully for several years and provides an important transportation link between communities in Grey and Wellington Counties. The service supports access to employment, education, healthcare, and other essential services for residents who may otherwise have limited transportation options.

Suspending the service while Grey County and its municipal partners continue to evaluate a unified regional transit network could significantly impact existing riders and undermine the ridership and public confidence established over time. If service were discontinued and reinstated at a later date, substantial effort would be required to rebuild awareness and encourage residents to return to the service.

Maintaining uninterrupted service during this transitional period is considered the most practical approach while regional transit discussions continue. Grey County Council has endorsed the continuation of GOST Transit until a regional transit system is established; however, the current County Council has formally approved funding through December 31, 2026. Funding beyond this date will be subject to approval by the newly elected County Council in early 2027.

It is recommended that the City enter into an amending agreement with 947465 Ontario Ltd. o/a Voyago to extend transit services from September 1, 2026, until December 31, 2026. It is recommended that the City enter into an amending funding agreement with Grey County through to June 30, 2027, to align with the anticipated implementation timeline for a regional transit system.

Bus stop License Amending Agreements between the City of Owen Sound and various property owners for bus stop locations will be required to extend the existing agreements through to June 30, 2027, in anticipation of the implementation of a regional transit system. The Guelph Central Station stop is covered under an agreement between Voyago and the City of Guelph, while all remaining stops fall under agreements with the City of Owen Sound:

1. Six and Ten Mini-Mart – Former Village of Chatsworth
2. Township of Chatsworth – Williamsford Community Centre
3. Northern Credit Union Limited – Queen Street South – Durham (Municipality of West Grey)

4. Township of Wellington North – Mount Forest
5. Township of Wellington North – Arthur
6. Township of Centre Wellington – Fergus and Elora

The City will also need to extend contracts with City staff required to support GOST operations, including staff working Sundays during this period.

Resource Alignment:

Financial Resources

The GOST service will be fully funded through the County of Grey and fare revenue.

947465 Ontario Ltd. o/a Voyago has proposed a 2% increase to the current cost of the service. The estimated cost for Voyago services to operate GOST from September 1, 2026, to December 31, 2026, is \$122,512 (excluding HST).

The contractor has requested that the theoretical fuel consumption rate identified in the original agreement be increased from 5.25 liters per revenue hour to 10 liters per revenue hour. Based on current operating assumptions, this change would increase the maximum monthly fuel payment by approximately \$2,500. The existing rate was established at the commencement of the agreement and the requested increase reflects the contractor's experience with fuel consumption and increased operating costs over the term of the service.

For the period from September 1 to December 31, 2026, the estimated gross operating cost of the service is \$162,512 (excluding HST). This amount includes an additional \$40,000 to cover fuel and program staff expenses. These estimated costs do not account for any fare revenue.

Human Resources

It is anticipated that approximately 8-12 hours of staff time will be required to prepare, coordinate, and administer the necessary agreements.

The continued operation of GOST from September 1, 2026, to December 31, 2026, will require transit terminal staffing coverage consisting of Sundays at 7.5 hours each, Saturdays at 2 hours each, and statutory holidays at 7.5 hours each.

These hours relate to a combination of contract employee time and additional hours for transit staff and will be fully funded by the County. In addition, an estimated 1–4 hours per month of time for the Environmental Services Supervisor will be required during this period, primarily for invoice review and payment, data review, and general oversight; this timeframe reflects a low level of operational inquiries and minimal service disruptions.

Time and Scheduling

N/A.

Technology and Infrastructure

N/A.

Climate and Environmental Impacts:

The recommendation supports both the City's Corporate Climate Change Adaptation Plan and the City's Climate Mitigation Plan.

Public Transportation can reduce vehicle usage by consolidation, potentially resulting in lower community greenhouse gas emissions.

Communication and Engagement:

Staff will issue a Media Release, and updates will be posted on the [GOST webpage](#).

Report Developed in Consultation With:

City Solicitor, Manager of Legislative Services, Voyago Vice President of Operations, County of Grey Manager of Community Transportation

Attachments:

None.

Reviewed by:

Mason Bellamy, Manager of Public Works and Engineering

Submission approved by:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Heidi Jennen, Supervisor of Environmental Services at hjennen@owensound.ca or 519-376-4440 ext. 3223.