



The Corporation of the Town of Tecumseh

Planning & Building Services

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Brian Hillman, Director Planning & Building Services

Date to Council: August 11, 2020

Report Number: PBS-2020-26

Subject: Tecumseh Transit Service (TTS)
January to June 2020 Status Report
OUR FILE: T03 TTS

Recommendations

It is recommended:

That PBS-2020-26 – Tecumseh Transit Service (TTS), January to June 2020 Status Report, **be received**.

Executive Summary

This Report provides Council with an overview of ridership and revenue for the Tecumseh Transit Service (TTS) for the first six months (January to June) of the 2020 calendar year. It is important to note that the Provincial Emergency regarding COVID-19 was declared March 17, 2020 and continued through this six-month reporting period. For the first two months of 2020, TTS ridership and revenue levels were higher relative to the first two months of 2019. With the onset of the COVID-19 emergency, however, the TTS experienced significant declines in ridership and revenue which are anticipated to continue until the pandemic is no longer a threat. The decrease in revenue during this time was due to the decision of the Town to eliminate the transit fare early on in the COVID-19 emergency (March 23). Elimination of transit fares was a measure implemented by many transit operations across the country in an effort to keep transit riders and drivers safe while continuing to provide this essential service to the community.

Background

The Tecumseh Transit Service (TTS) is now mid-way into its eleventh year of operation since it was introduced to the northerly urban area of the Town in December of 2009. The TTS operates on a recently revised circuitous route with a one-hour headway covering 30 kilometres and 43 stops. This revised route was introduced in May of 2018 after an extensive public consultation process that resulted in some bus stop locations being removed and others added in an attempt to minimize delays in service.

The Town manages the service but contracts the operation and maintenance of the two Town-owned buses to First Student Canada (FSC). This contract expires at the end of 2020; it includes an option to extend for another term.

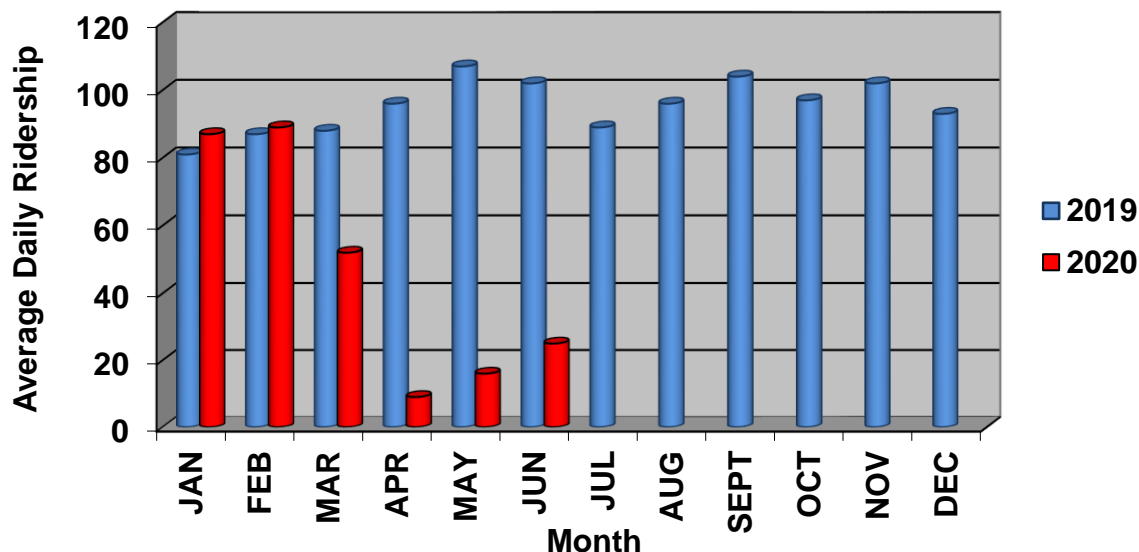
The purpose of this Planning Report is to provide Council with a ridership and revenue overview of the Tecumseh Transit Service (TTS) for the first six months (January to June) of the 2020 calendar year. As expected, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and related Provincial Orders, along with the temporary stoppage of the City of Windsor's transit system during the month of April, the statistics identify a dramatic decrease in overall ridership and revenue when compared to 2019. As well, Council authorized the waiving of transit fees effective March 23, 2020. This cancellation of fees continued to the end of this reporting period and will be in effect until September 8, 2020. This measure was implemented by many transit operations across the country in an effort to keep transit riders and drivers safe while continuing to provide this essential service to the community.

Comments

January to June 2020 Ridership Analysis

Although the first two months of the year experienced higher average daily ridership when compared against the same period for 2019, the balance of the months experienced a drastic decrease in ridership levels. Monthly average daily ridership for the first six months of 2020 ranged from a pre-COVID high of 89 riders per day in February to a low of nine riders per day in April (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1
Average Daily Ridership by Month
2019 and Jan-June 2020



Exacerbating the negative impact that COVID-19 had on ridership levels during the month of April was the fact that the Transit Windsor system was not operating from March 26 to May 4. Many TTS riders rely on the Transit Windsor system to get to their ultimate destination in the City and, conversely, many Transit Windsor riders board the TTS to get to their ultimate destination in Tecumseh.

Although ridership levels dropped drastically in the initial stages of the COVID-19 Emergency, it is evident from this chart that riders are gradually becoming more comfortable with using the TTS once again as the ridership levels increased from a daily average of nine boardings in April to a daily average of 25 boardings in the month of June. In addition, these numbers are reflective of the move from the Provincial “shutdown” to gradual re-opening of the economy and services over this period.

Figure 2 below illustrates ridership levels in the form of total monthly ridership from January 2019 to the end of June 2020. As expected, the highest monthly ridership totals in the first six months of 2020 were recorded in January and February with 2,256 and 2,134 boardings, respectively. Overall, total ridership has decreased by approximately 50% (or 7,080 riders) from January to June 2020 when compared against the same time period in 2019.

Figure 2
Total Monthly Ridership
2019 and January-June 2020

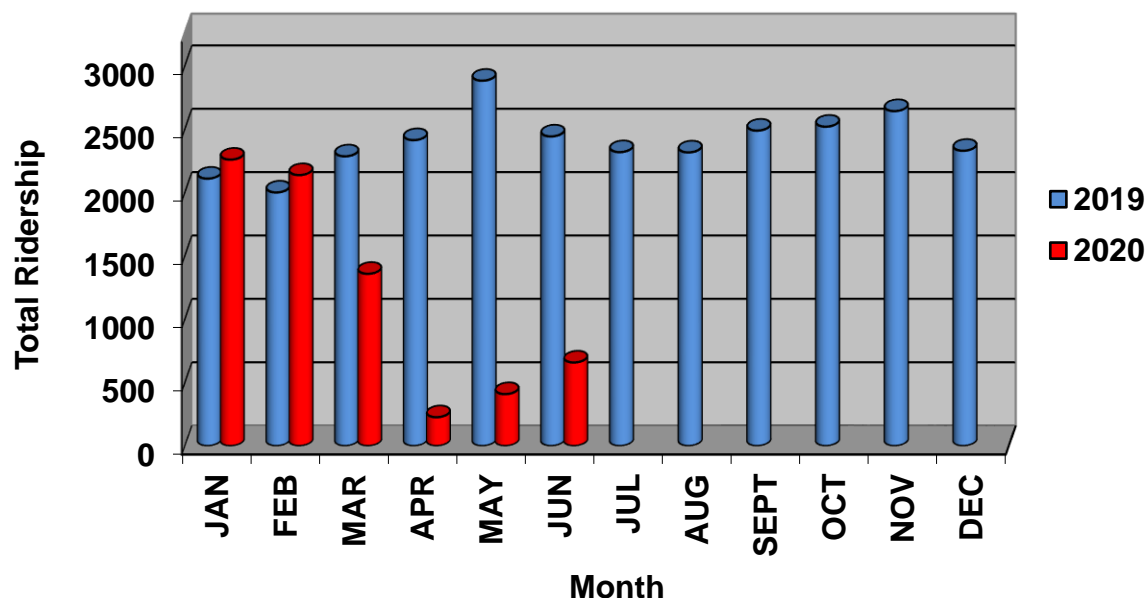


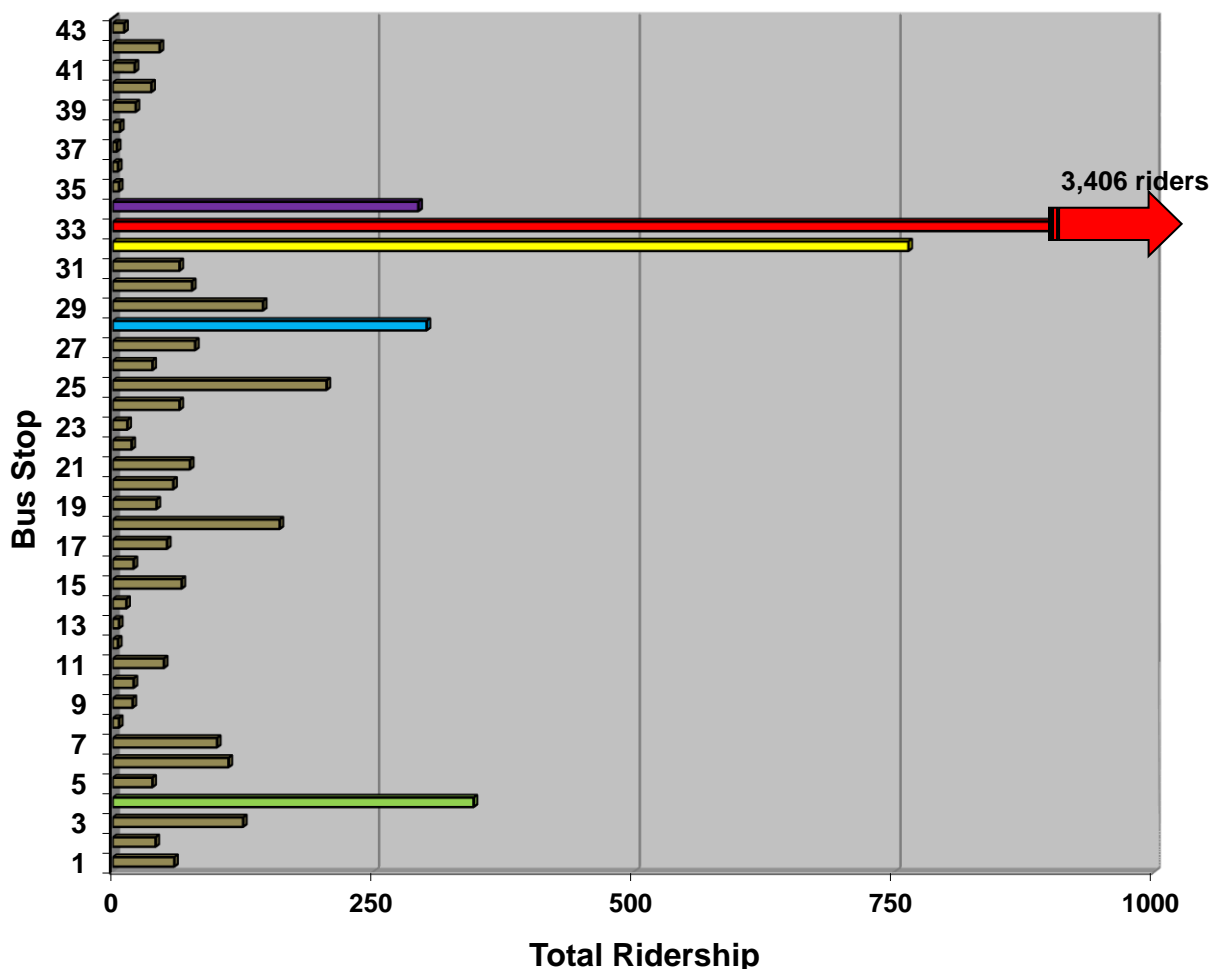
Figure 3 below and Attachment 1 illustrate ridership levels by bus stop for the first six months of 2020. Although there was a drastic reduction in overall ridership levels, the most often used stops continued to be the most popular stops during this period. The bus stop at Tecumseh Mall (red bar) continues to be the most popular stop/destination with 3,406 passengers boarding the TTS bus at this location. It was anticipated that this stop would have been, in relative terms, more dramatically impacted than others given the Transit Windsor system was not running from March 26 to May 4. This stop, however, accounted for 48.4% of all passengers for the first six months of 2020 which was only marginally less than the 49.4% it contributed to total boardings in 2019.

The next most popular stops for this period were:

- the bus stop immediately preceding the Tecumseh Mall stop at Southfield Drive (yellow bar – 10.8% of passengers);
- the Food Basic grocery store plaza (green bar – 4.9% of passengers);
- the bus stop located on Tecumseh Road at the municipal parking lot (blue bar – 4.3% of passengers); and

- the bus stop immediately after the Tecumseh Mall stop at Southfield Drive (purple bar – 4.2% of passengers)

Figure 3
Total Ridership by Bus Stop
January to June 2020



As illustrated in Figure 4 below, the TTS was in highest demand during the late morning period of 11:00 a.m. to noon, accounting for 11.2 percent of the total ridership, and the afternoon peak period between 2:00 and 4:00 p.m., with this two-hour period accounting for 22.3% of the total ridership. It is believed that the higher ridership during the afternoon peak period is largely attributed to student ridership in the pre-COVID-19 period. Ridership levels are at their lowest during the first and last runs of the daily service in the hours of 6-7 a.m. and 5-6 p.m.

Figure 4
Total Ridership by Time of Day
January to June 2020

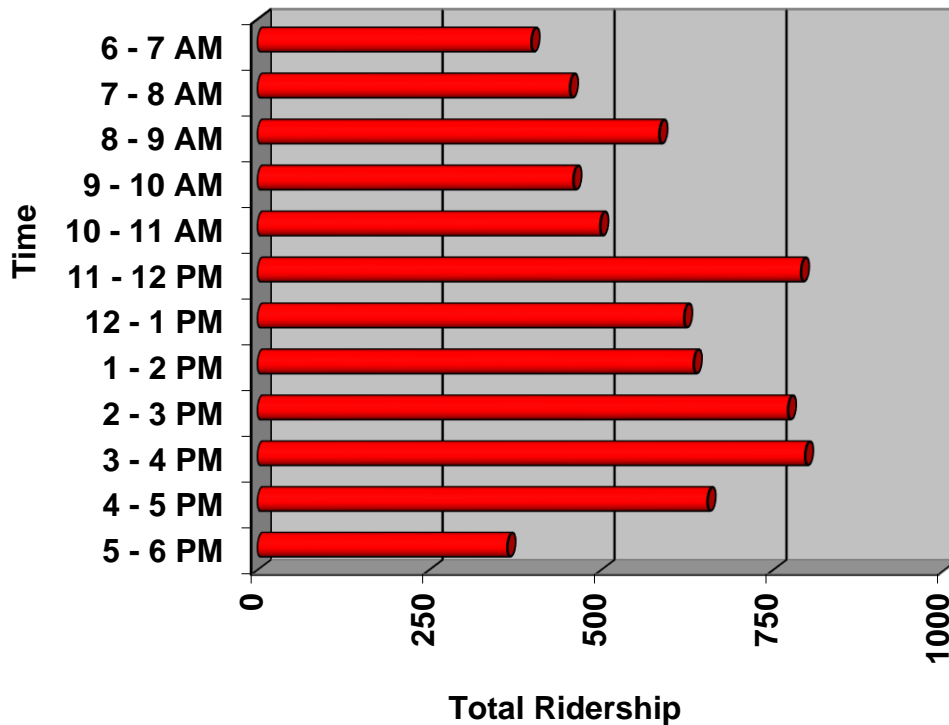
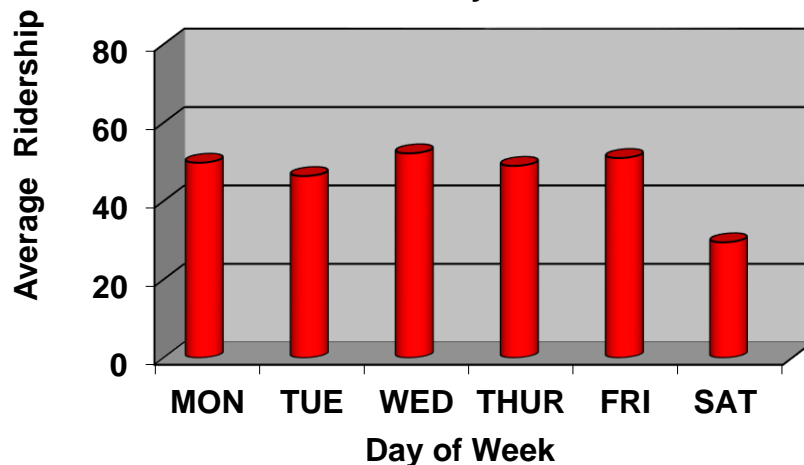


Figure 5 below illustrates that, with the exception of Saturday, there does not seem to be any significant differentiation amongst the days of the week on which people are using the transit system. Lower ridership on Saturdays is attributed to fewer students using the service on this day and to fewer places of employment being open.

Figure 5
Average Daily Ridership by Day of the Week
January to June 2020



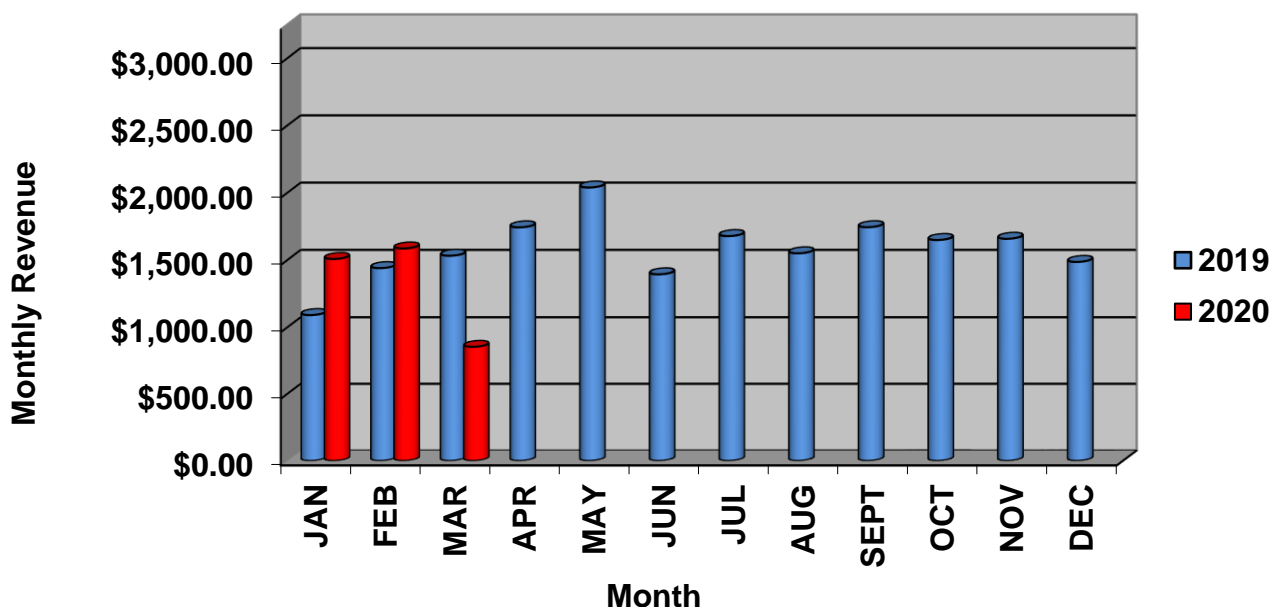
January to June 2020 Ridership Revenue Analysis

Figure 6 depicts a comparison of monthly total fare box revenues generated by the TTS from January 2019 to the end of June 2020. As noted previously, the dramatic decrease in revenue is attributed to the fact that the TTS has been operating as a free service since March 23, 2020. Again, it is important to note that revenues for January and February of 2020 were above those of the same period in 2019.

Total monthly fare box revenues for the first six months of 2020 were \$3,957 (compared to \$9,256 for the first six months of 2019). An additional \$1,420 was also generated through the sale of 16 bus passes from January to June 2020 (compared to \$2,715 generated through the sale of 42 bus passes during the same period of 2019). Accordingly, the total revenue for the first six months of 2020 was \$5,377 (compared to \$11,971 in same period for 2019). This represents a decrease of approximately 55% in total revenue.

Of the 16 bus passes that were issued so far in 2020, six were sold to both adults and students and the remaining four were senior passes. Riders with bus passes are primarily Tecumseh residents and students that use the TTS on a daily basis and, in some instances, multiple times per day. It should be noted that those riders who purchased bus passes covering the March 23 to September 8 period for which fares were eliminated will be credited for this time period.

Figure 6
Total Monthly Fare Box Revenues
2019 and June to January 2020



Prior to the COVID-19 period, there were both cash fare and non-cash fare options for passengers. Non-cash fares include the following categories:

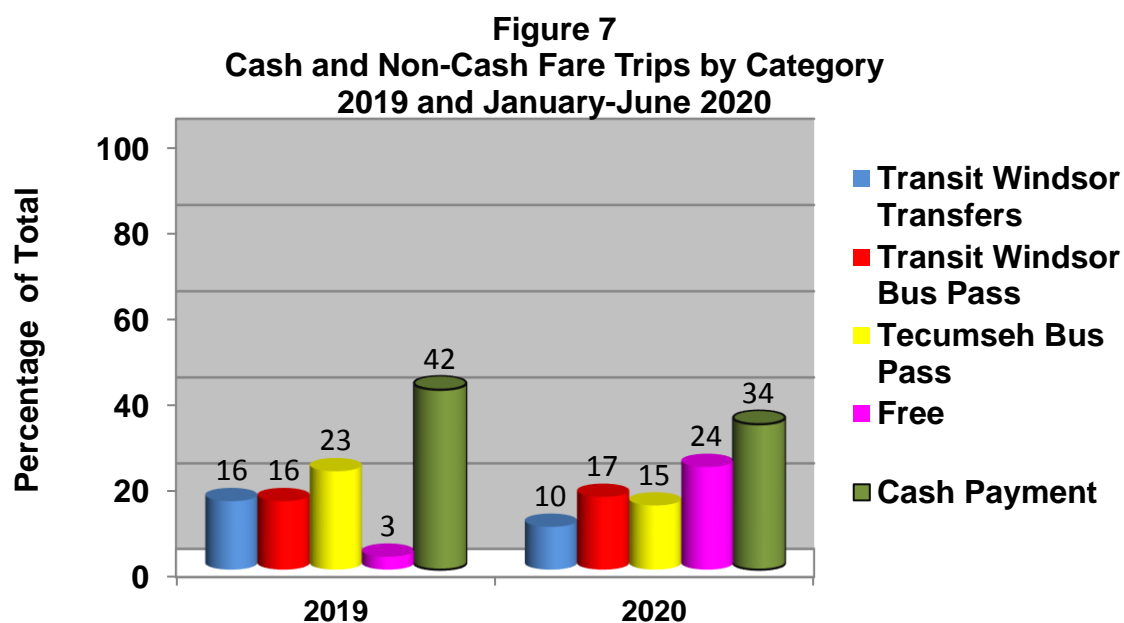
- Transit Windsor transfer (at Tecumseh Mall only);
- Transit Windsor bus pass (at Tecumseh Mall only);
- TTS bus pass; or
- free riders (i.e. child under the age of five, blind persons, veterans and persons assisting a person with a disability)

Figure 7 below identifies the distribution of passengers based on category of fare payment.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the cash and non-cash fare trip profile experienced significant changes when compared to 2019. This is primarily due to the fact that the service has been free since March 23. As a result, free riders accounted for 24% of total trips compared to 3% of total trips in 2019. The elimination of transit fares has also lead to a corresponding drop in cash fares and in the purchase of TTS Bus Passes.

For the first six months of 2020, Transit Windsor transfers accounted for 10% of total trips and 16% of all non-cash fare trips. These trips are primarily Tecumseh residents who pay an outbound fare (to get to Tecumseh Mall), continue into Windsor by using the Transit Windsor system, then return to Tecumseh by using the aforementioned transfer stub.

Trips using a Transit Windsor bus pass, which accounted for 17% of total trips and 25% of non-cash fare trips, represent trips by those who board the bus at Tecumseh Mall from the Transit Windsor system and take the bus into Tecumseh. These riders then pay the required fare when returning to Tecumseh Mall on the outbound trip back into the City of Windsor. These two boarding options continue to be valid only when boarding the bus at Tecumseh Mall.



The first six months of 2020 saw a decrease in passengers using a TTS bus pass which provides access to the system at any stop. These passengers accounted for 15% of total trips and 23% of all non-cash fare trips (compared to 23% of total trips and 41% of all non-cash fare trips in 2019). These riders have purchased a monthly bus pass at the Town Municipal Office.

Summary

After an encouraging start to 2020, TTS ridership levels experienced a significant decline beginning in March and extending through to the end of this reporting period as a result of the COVID-19 emergency. The decline in ridership levels was initially exacerbated by the stoppage in service by Transit Windsor during the month of April. Although ridership levels gradually increased from a daily average of nine boardings during the initial stages of the pandemic to a daily average of 25 boardings in the month of June, they are not anticipated to reach pre-pandemic levels in the near future.

Despite the lower ridership during the COVID-19 emergency, the TTS remains an essential service for many in the community. It is anticipated that once the Province advances the Windsor-Essex region to Reopening Stage 3, TTS ridership will increase while the re-initiation of transit fares beginning September 8, 2020 will assist in once again generating revenues for this essential community service.

Given the contract expires at the end of 2020, with the option for an extension, Administration will evaluate service delivery options and report back to Council in the Fall with a recommended course of action.

Consultations

First Student Canada

Financial Implications

None

Link to Strategic Priorities

Applicable	2019-22 Strategic Priorities
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Make the Town of Tecumseh an even better place to live, work and invest through a shared vision for our residents and newcomers.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ensure that Tecumseh's current and future growth is built upon the principles of sustainability and strategic decision-making.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Integrate the principles of health and wellness into all of Tecumseh's plans and priorities.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Steward the Town's "continuous improvement" approach to municipal service delivery to residents and businesses.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Demonstrate the Town's leadership role in the community by promoting good governance and community engagement, by bringing together organizations serving the Town and the region to pursue common goals.

Communications

Not applicable ☒

Website ☐ Social Media ☐ News Release ☐ Local Newspaper ☐

This report has been reviewed by Senior Administration as indicated below and recommended for submission by the Chief Administrative Officer.

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Chief Administrative Officer

**Attachment
Number**

**Attachment
Name**

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January to June 2020 Ridership Totals by Bus Stop Map