



## **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:** March 9, 2021

**Report Number:** PBS-2021-10

**Subject:** Annual Status Report on the Tecumseh Transit Service for 2020  
OUR FILE: T03 TTS

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### **Recommendations**

It is recommended:

**That PBS-2021-10, Annual Status Report on the Tecumseh Transit Service for 2020, be received.**

### **Executive Summary**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Provincial Emergency regarding COVID-19 was declared March 22, 2020), the Tecumseh Transit Service (TTS) ridership levels for 2020 decreased by approximately 55% compared to the 2019 ridership levels. The 2020 total revenue also decreased by 62% over the 2019 levels. A large portion of the decrease in revenue can be attributed to the decision of the Town to eliminate transit fares early on in the COVID-19 emergency (fares were eliminated from March 23 to September 8, 2020 and then from December 19, 2020 to present). 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. The purpose of this Report is to provide Council with a statistical overview of the TTS for the 2020 calendar year and to provide an outlook of initiatives anticipated for 2021.

### **Background**

The Tecumseh Transit Service (TTS) is now into its twelfth year of operation since it was introduced to the northerly urban area of the Town in December of 2009. The TTS operates

on a circuitous route with a one-hour headway covering 30 kilometres and 43 stops. This route was slightly revised 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). The contract was set to expire at the end of 2020, however in November 2020, Council approved a two-year extension to the existing contract for the period January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2022, in accordance with PBS-2020-38.

The purpose of this Planning Report is to provide Council with a ridership and revenue overview of the Tecumseh Transit Service (TTS) for 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 delegated authority to the waiving of transit fees as necessary, and as such, transit fees were waived effective March 23, 2020 to September 8, 2020 and then from December 19, 2020 to present. These periods correspond with periods of heightened COVID-19 restrictions and were 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.

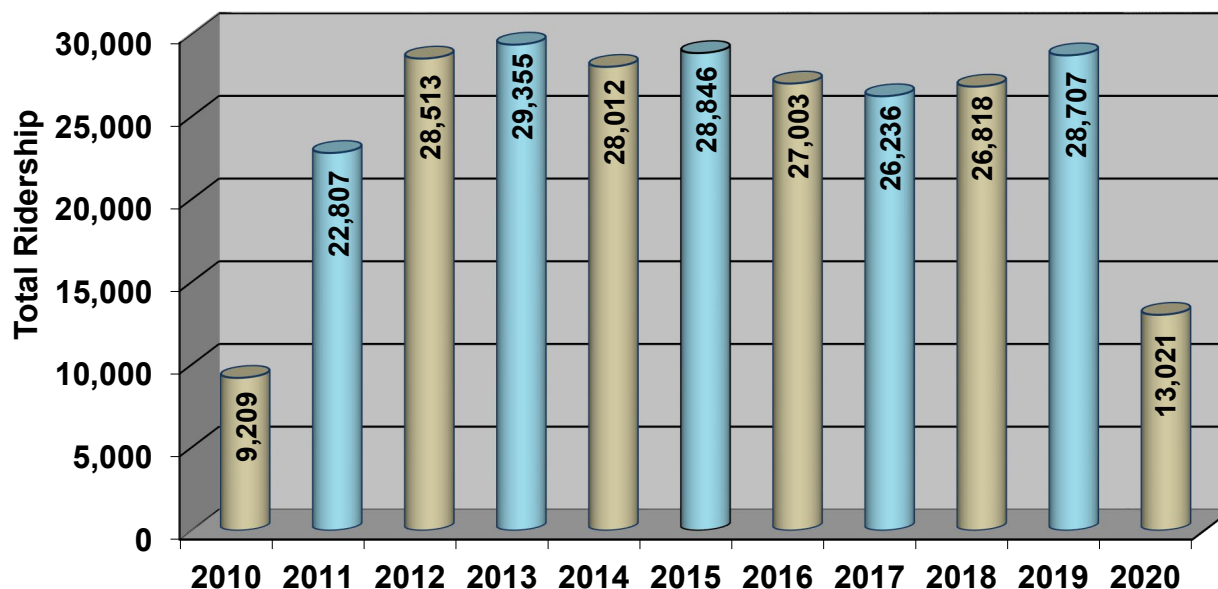
## **Comments**

### **Ridership Use Analysis**

The current route is conveniently accessible to 65 percent of the population of Tecumseh with accessibility being based on a 400-metre walking distance to a bus stop. Within the northerly settlement area of the Town, 72% of the population have reasonable access to the service. When only the urban area north of County Road 22 is considered, the route is accessible to nearly 90% of the population. Over the past eleven years, the TTS has served approximately 281,000 riders and, in the prior nine years, had maintained an annual ridership of between 26,000 and 29,000.

Total ridership in 2020 was 13,021 (see Figure 1 below) which represents a decrease in ridership of approximately 55% from the 2019 total ridership of 28,707. This decrease can be directly attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a comparison, Transit Windsor announced in early February 2020 that ridership levels for its service decreased by 85% compared to pre-pandemic ridership levels.

**Figure 1**  
**Total Yearly Ridership**  
**2010 to 2020**



As expected, the average daily ridership by month for 2020 was consistently below 2019 levels after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March (see Figure 2 below). In 2020, the TTS reached a monthly average daily ridership peak of 90 passengers in February, followed by drastic reductions that ranged from an average of 9 to 52 riders per day throughout the balance of 2020.

**Figure 2**  
**Average Daily Ridership by Month**  
**2019 and 2020**

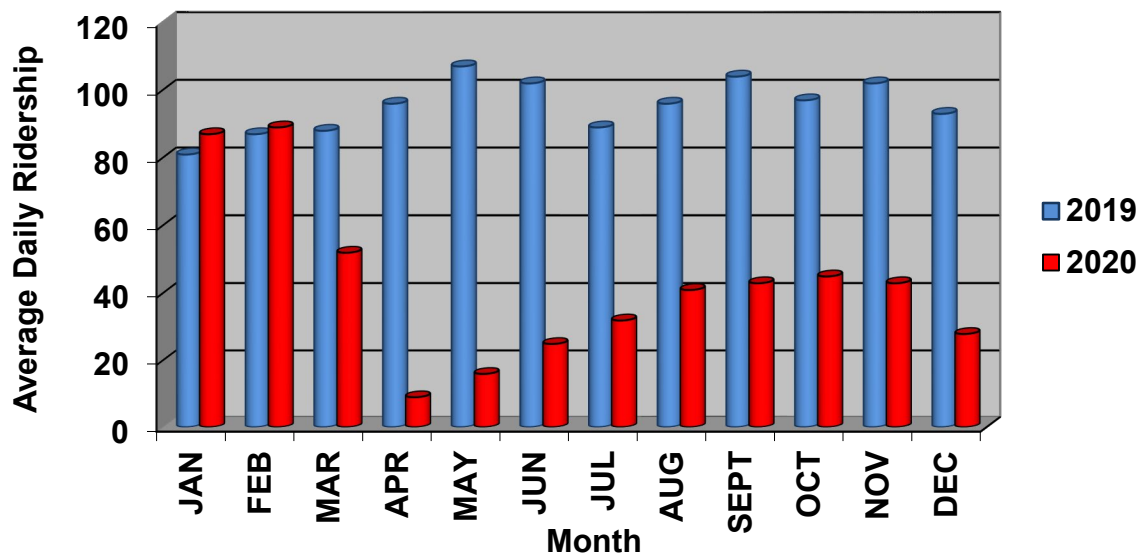


Figure 3 below provides a comparison of total monthly ridership for 2019 and 2020. The 2020 total monthly ridership high of 2,256 occurred in January. It should be noted that ridership levels in January and February of 2020 were higher than 2019 levels.

**Figure 3**  
**Total Monthly Ridership**  
**2019 and 2020**

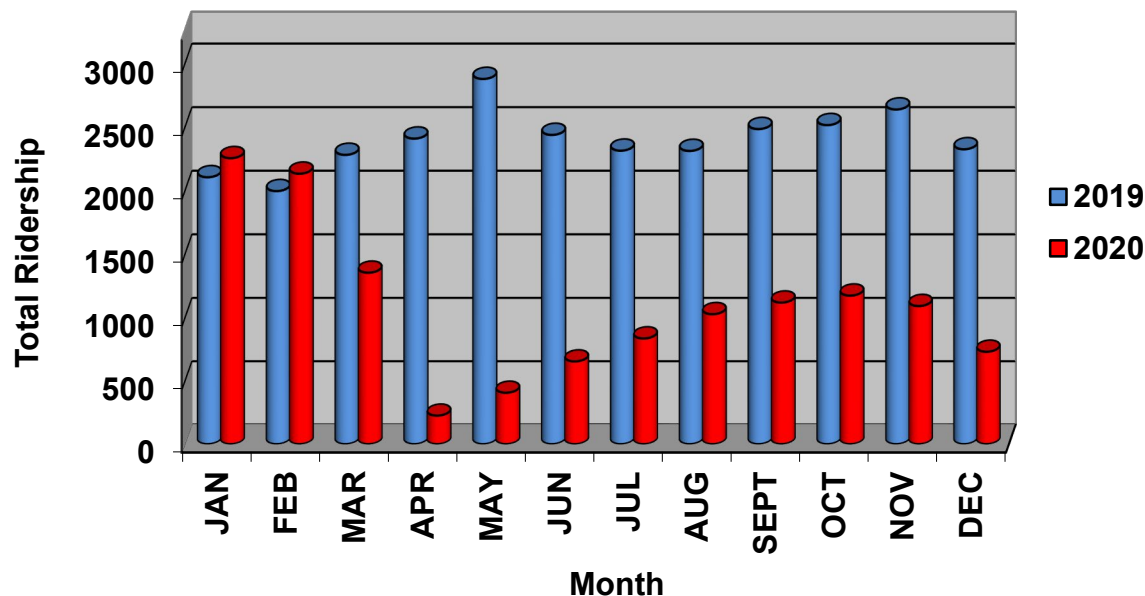


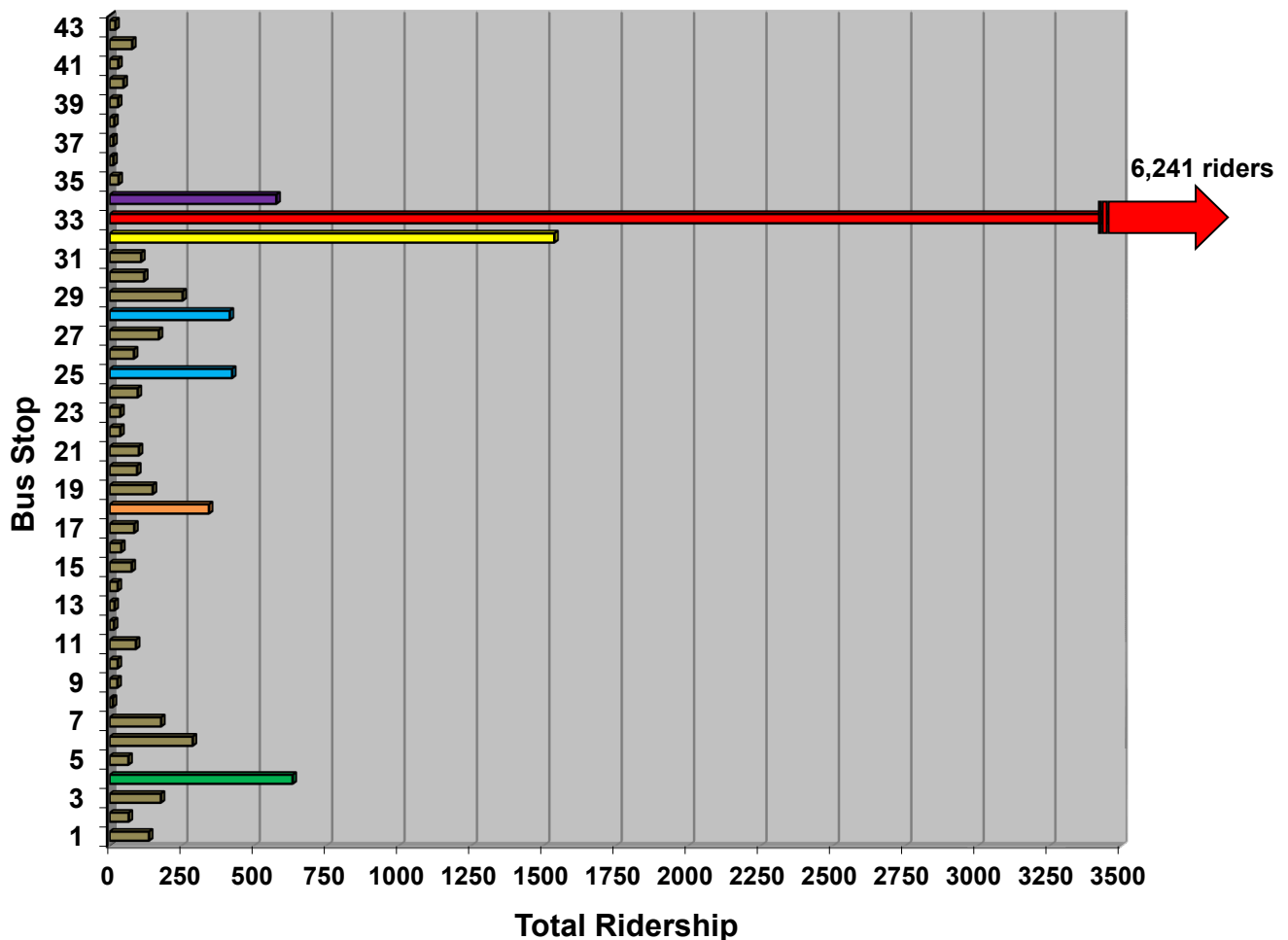
Figure 3 below and Attachment 1 illustrate ridership levels by bus stop for 2020. Although there was a drastic reduction in overall ridership levels, the most often used stops continued to be the most popular stops during this period. The bus stop at Tecumseh Mall (red bar) continues to be the most popular stop/destination with 48% of 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, was only marginally below the 49.4% it contributed to total boarding volume in 2019.

The next most popular stops in 2020 were:

- the bus stop immediately preceding the Tecumseh Mall stop at Southfield Drive (yellow bar – 11.8% of passengers);
- the Food Basic grocery store plaza (green bar – 4.9% of passengers);
- the bus stop immediately after the Tecumseh Mall stop at Southfield Drive (purple bar – 4.4% of passengers);
- the bus stops located on Lesperance Road at Little River and the one located on Tecumseh Road at the municipal parking lot (blue bars – 3.2% of passengers each); and

- the Tecumseh Medical Centre on Tecumseh Road (orange bar – 2.6% of passengers)

**Figure 4**  
**Total Ridership by Bus Stop**  
**2020**



As shown in Figure 5 below, the TTS was in highest demand during the afternoon peak period between 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. accounting for 21.4% of the total ridership. The next highest ridership levels are experienced during the mid-day hours of 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and the post-work afternoon peak hour of 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Ridership is at its lowest during the early morning (6:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m.) and early evening hours (5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.) at the beginning and end of the daily schedule.

**Figure 5**  
**Total Ridership by Time of Day**  
**2020**

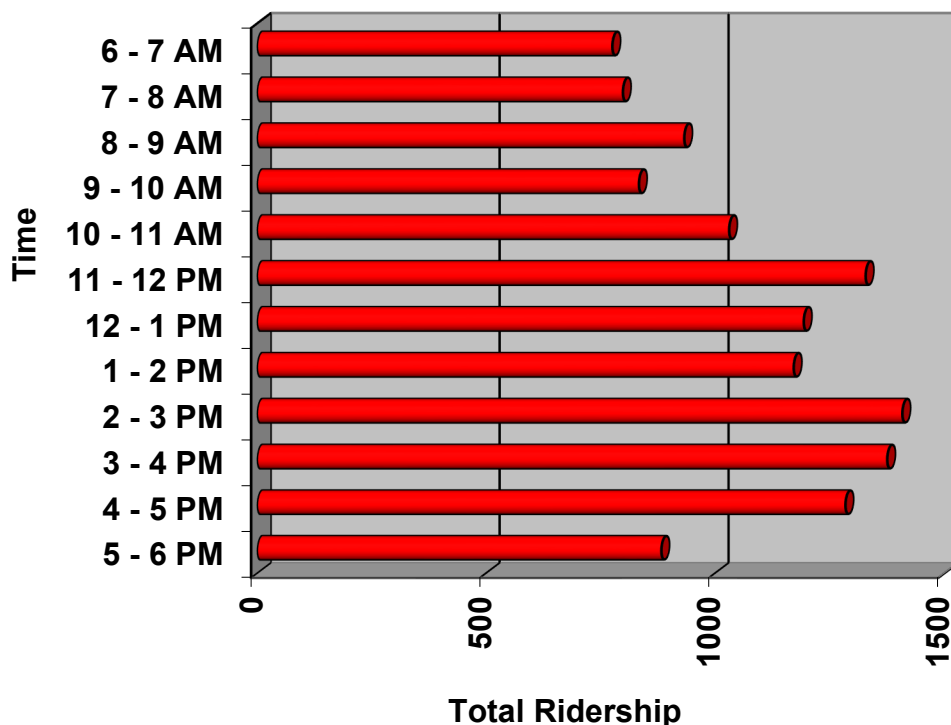
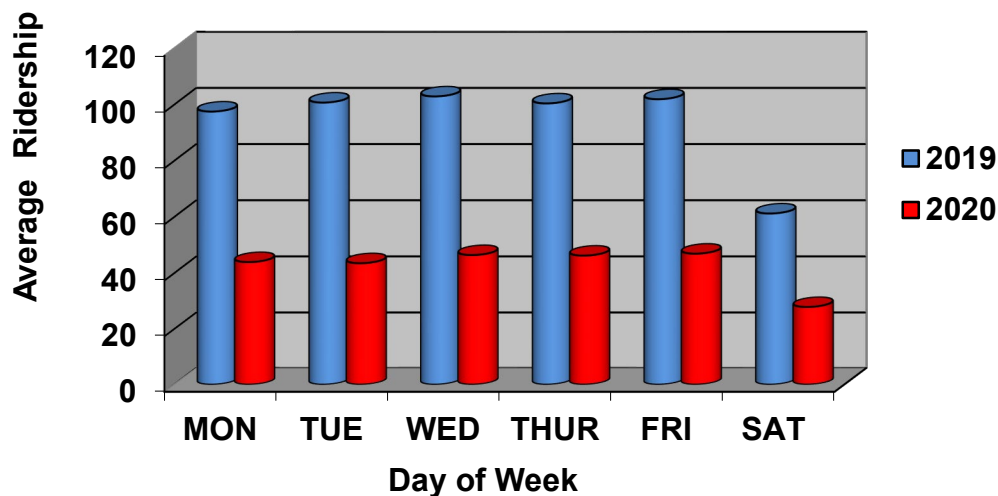


Figure 6 below illustrates that, with the exception of Saturday, there does not seem to be any significant difference amongst the days of the week on which people are using the transit system. Lower ridership on Saturdays can be attributed to fewer students using the service on this day and fewer places of employment being open. The lower daily ridership levels are indicative of the aforementioned reduction in overall ridership for 2020.

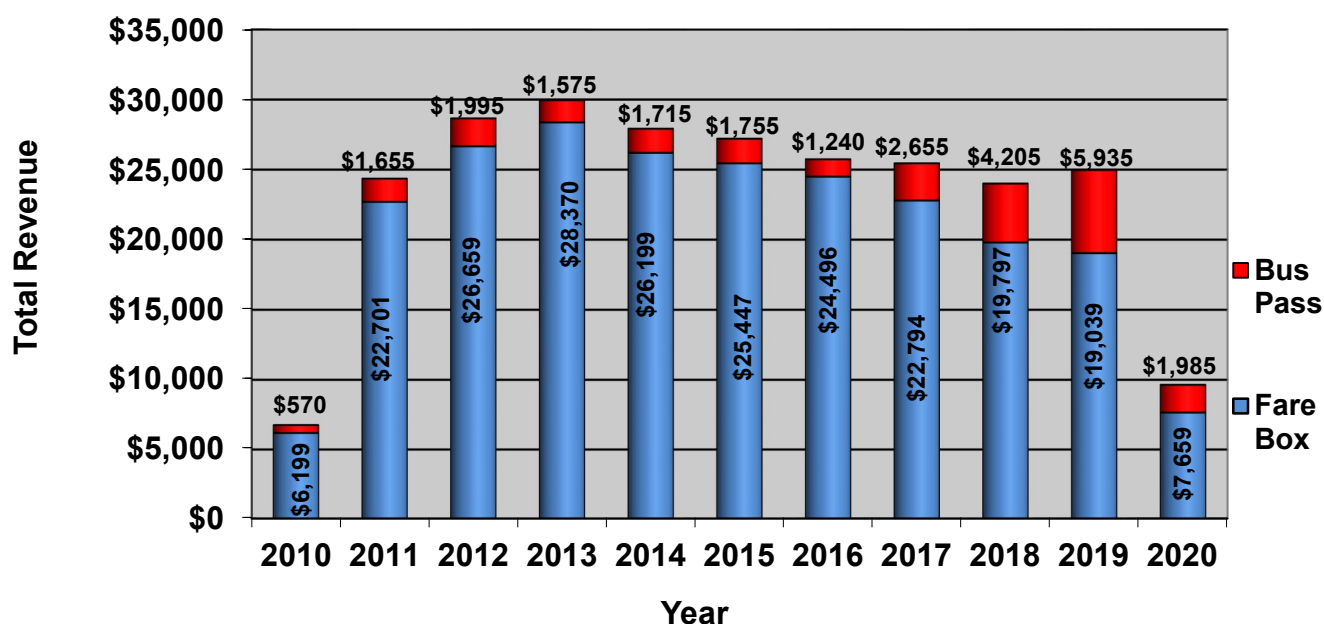
**Figure 6**  
**Average Daily Ridership by Day of the Week**  
**2019 and 2020**



## Ridership Revenue Analysis

Figure 7 depicts total annual fare box and bus pass revenues generated by the TTS from 2010 to 2020. The 2020 total annual fare box revenues were \$7,659 (compared to \$19,039 for 2019) representing a 60% decrease in fare box revenue over the previous year. As noted previously, the dramatic decrease in revenue is attributed to the reduced ridership levels and that the TTS operated as a free service for approximately 50% of 2020. Again, it is important to note that revenues for January and February of 2020 were above those of the same period in 2019.

**Figure 7**  
**Annual Revenues**  
**2010 to 2020**



An additional \$1,985 was also generated through the sale of 25 bus passes in 2020 (compared to \$5,935 in 2019). It should be noted that those riders who purchased bus passes covering the March 23 to September 8 period for which fares were eliminated are to be credited for this time period. Accordingly, the total revenue generated for 2020 was \$9,644 (compared to \$24,974 for 2019). This represents a decrease of approximately 62% in total revenue.

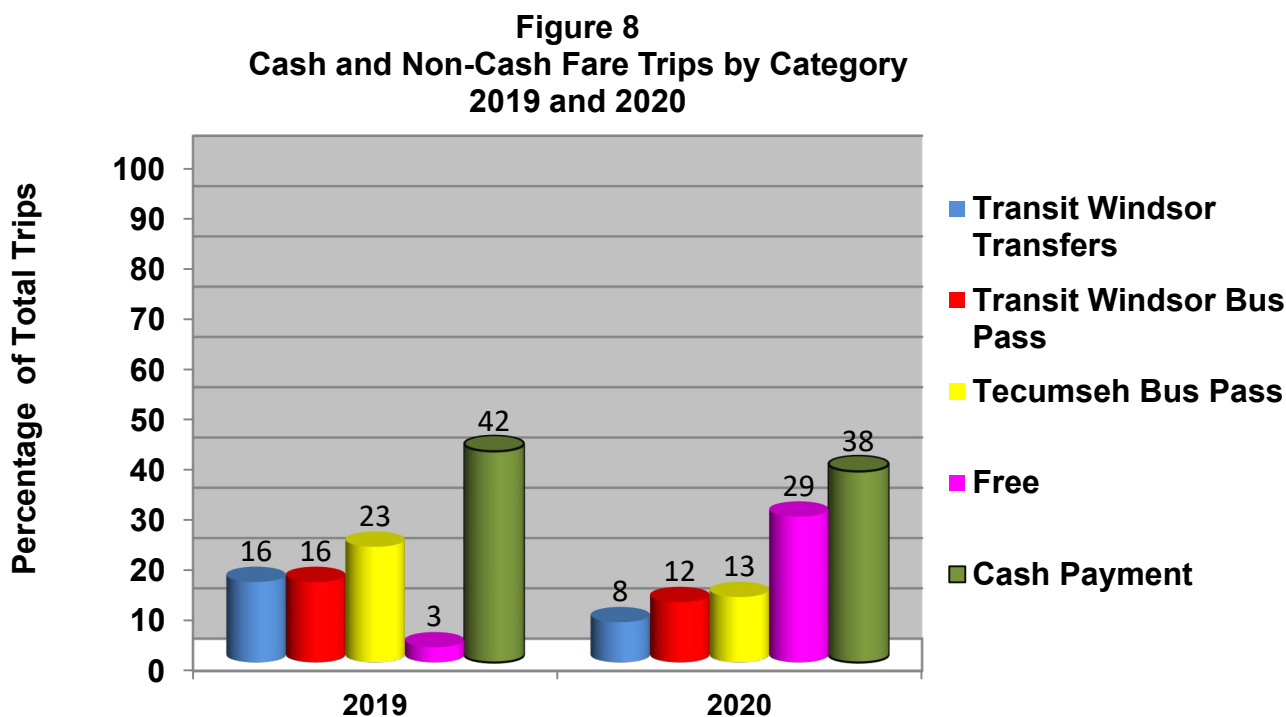
Prior to the COVID-19 period, there were both cash fare and non-cash fare options for passengers. Non-cash fare includes the following categories:

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

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 extended period of time that the service was free for riders. As a result, free riders accounted for 29% of total trips in 2020 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.

Figure 8 below identifies the distribution of passengers based on category of fare payment. For 2020, the Transit Windsor transfers accounted for 12% of all non-cash fare trips (compared to 28% in 2019) and 8% of total trips (compared to 16% in 2019). These trips are primarily Tecumseh residents who pay an outbound fare (to Tecumseh Mall), continue into Windsor by using the Transit Windsor system, then return to Tecumseh by using the transfer stub.

In 2020, riders using a Transit Windsor bus pass when boarding the bus at Tecumseh Mall accounted for 19% of all non-cash fare trips (compared to 27% in 2019) and 12% of total trips (compared to 16% in 2019). These users are 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.



Passengers using a Tecumseh Transit bus pass, providing access to the system at any stop, accounted for 20% of all non-cash fare trips (compared to 40% in 2019) and 13% of total trips (compared to 25% in 2019). These riders have purchased a monthly bus pass at the Town Municipal Office. A total of 25 Tecumseh Transit bus passes were purchased in 2019, down from the 90 purchased in 2019. Adults accounted for 10 passes, Students seven passes and Seniors 7 passes. As noted above, free riders accounted for 29% of all trips in 2020 (compared to 3% in 2019).



## **Initiatives Planned for 2021**

### **Canada Healthy Communities Initiative - Pilot Program of On-Demand Transit for Tecumseh Transit Service**

On February 23, 2021, Council approved PBS-2021-07, thereby endorsing the filing of an application for funding a one-year pilot project for an on-demand transit service to the Canada Healthy Communities Initiative (CHCI). The CHCI is a \$31 million Government of Canada application-based grant program intended to support communities in adapting spaces and services to respond to immediate and ongoing needs arising from COVID-19 over the next two years. Improving mobility options by way of public transit system adjustments is one of the project streams being funded up to \$250,000. Pending outcome of the funding approval, the on-demand transit service pilot program is proposed to be initiated in mid-2021.

### **Town of Lakeshore Transit Needs Analysis**

The Town of Lakeshore has hired Stantec Transit Team to undertake a Transit Options Study. The study began in February and is expected to take six months to complete. The purpose of the study is to consider multiple transit options and integration into existing regional services (i.e. TTS and Transit Windsor). As part of this study's stakeholder engagement process, it has been noted that the Town of Tecumseh will be invited to provide input. Administration will monitor the progress of this study and continue to engage the Town of Lakeshore on cross-boundary transit service opportunities along with the City of Windsor.

## **Summary**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Provincial Emergency regarding COVID-19 was declared March 22, 2020), the TTS ridership levels for 2020 decreased by approximately 55% compared to the 2019 ridership levels. The 2020 total revenue also decreased by 62% over the 2019 levels. A large portion of the decrease in revenue can be attributed to the decision of the Town to eliminate transit fares early on in the COVID-19 emergency (fares were eliminated from March 23 to September 8, 2020 and then from December 19, 2020 to the present). The Town continues to explore ways to optimize its transit service and will be undertaking, subject to CHCI funding, an on-demand transit service pilot project beginning in 2021 to evaluate the effectiveness of this type of flexible service over the current fixed route service utilized by the TTS. Engagement with Lakeshore and Windsor will continue regarding transit issues throughout this period.

## **Consultations**

Financial Services  
First Student Canada

## Financial Implications

The Town received an allocation of \$33,894 from the Safe Restart Agreement (SRA) – Transit Stream Phase 1 in August 2020 to help support the Town's transit system facing financial pressures due to COVID-19. The SRA Phase 1 funding is intended to help offset financial pressures directly resulting from COVID-19 for the period April 1, 2020 through to March 31, 2021. The Town has not yet completed our 2020 year-end financials, however it is estimated that direct costs/lost revenues associated with COVID-19 will amount to approximately \$20,000 for our fiscal year. The SRA agreement allows that funds allocated, but not required, by December 31, 2020, can be carried forward by the Town to be used against COVID-19 financial pressures during the first quarter of 2021.

The Town has also been allocated up to an additional \$67,890 through SRA Transit stream Phase 2 funding. This funding was announced in December 2020 and is intended to help municipal transit systems towards COVID-19 financial pressures for the period October 1, 2020 through to March 31, 2021. These funds have yet to be released by the Province. Any unrequired funds for both SRA Phase 1 and Phase 2 are to be returned to the Province.

## 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 checked="" 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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Recommended by:

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**Attachment  
Number**

**Attachment  
Name**

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2020 Ridership Totals by Bus Stop Map