



# City Council Report

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**REPORT NUMBER** 102-2026-Community Services-Transit Services

**DATE**

**PREPARED**

February 19, 2026

**FILE**

**CITY COUNCIL  
MEETING DATE**

March 3, 2026

**SUBJECT**

Transit Summer Service Adjustments

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## **RECOMMENDATION TO CITY COUNCIL**

WITH RESPECT to Report 102-2026-Community Services-Transit Services, we recommend that Administration move forward with implementing temporary schedule changes across various conventional transit routes starting May 10, 2026 to reduce the number of unplanned bus cancellations and improve system reliability;

AND THAT Administration monitor staffing levels and incrementally increase conventional and specialized transit service levels over the summer and fall when and where feasible as staffing levels recover;

AND THAT any necessary by-laws be presented to City Council for ratification.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Transit Services continues to experience a shortage of Transit Operators, including Specialized Operators, resulting in above average unplanned conventional trip cancellations. This creates a need to prioritize the deployment of available Transit Operators to mitigate negative impacts to passengers of core conventional and Lift+ specialized Transit service. More recently, vehicle shortages due to maintenance issues have also contributed to the cancellation issue on occasion. These cancellations are causing many trips to be cancelled weekly. The average system-wide trip delivery rate target is 99% or better. In 2025 the average system-wide conventional trip delivery rate was approximately 96%. High cancellations create significant disruptions for passengers, resulting in increased travel times, heightened stress, and a loss of trust in the reliability of public transportation. LIFT+ Specialized Transit service operates as scheduled but also experiences ongoing Operator availability constraints that hinder the capability to expand service capacity to meet actual demand.

This report seeks Council's approval of the recommendations to implement temporary schedule changes across select conventional transit routes beginning May 10, 2026, by adjusting bus schedules to match actual staff available to perform all planned work. This

proposed approach is intended to improve service reliability and predictability, better align available staffing resources with service delivery priorities, and manage passenger expectations during a period of sustained workforce constraints.

Administration will continue to closely monitor staffing levels and operational conditions and will incrementally restore conventional and specialized transit service levels during the summer and fall periods when and where feasible. Full-service levels will be reinstated when staffing levels are sufficient to reliably support regular day-to-day operations.

## ***DISCUSSION***

Transit Services continues to experience persistent staffing pressures that impact the ability to consistently deliver scheduled service across the conventional and specialized transit systems. These pressures include elevated daily staff unavailability due to a combination of vacancies, sick leave, disability leaves, vacation, training requirements, and employees temporarily assigned to other operational areas.

Maintaining current scheduled service levels under existing staffing conditions will result in continued service disruptions, short-notice cancellations, and inconsistent service delivery. Therefore, temporary summer schedule adjustments are being proposed to avoid/reduce those disruptions by better concentrating resources where they can deliver predictable service, thereby improving overall system reliability and reducing uncertainty for customers.

A comparison of current versus proposed temporary service schedule changes is provided in Attachment A – Current vs Proposed Conventional Schedule Framework. This attachment presents current versus proposed temporary adjustments to weekday and Saturday service by route and service period.

The proposed adjustments are intended to maintain overall network connectivity while improving service reliability under current staffing conditions. On some routes, service frequency is reduced during peak or off-peak periods to better align with available staffing resources, while on other routes frequency is maintained or improved to support coverage and customer demand. No changes are proposed to Sunday/Holiday service levels.

As contractually agreed to, changes are made to transit schedules four times each year through an Operator work assignment sign-up process with changes implemented every March, May, August and December. The next opportunity to implement the temporary service adjustments and schedule changes proposed in this report is May 10, 2026. Any delay in the approval of this recommendation would prevent the ability to complete all scheduling work required to implement the proposed May 10<sup>th</sup> schedule changes. Administration will continue to actively monitor staffing levels, recruitment progress, training capacity, and operational performance, and will incrementally restore service levels during the summer and fall periods as operating conditions allow.

As staffing levels allow, key focus will be to increase Specialized Transit service capacity, supporting additional trips for Lift+ registrants and improving the ability to accommodate

important accessible community transportation requirements such as Seniors Programming Transportation for Long Term Care Homes.

### **CONSULTATION**

Corporate Report 78-2026 – Community Services – Transit Service Adjustments was presented to the Quality of Life Standing Committee on February 10, 2026 to seek feedback and endorsement of the recommendation to implement temporary schedule changes across conventional transit routes starting May 10, 2026. The Committee recommended that the Report be referred back to Administration to meet with ATU Local 966 officials to determine additional options to address route cancellations and staffing issues.

Following Committee's direction to refer the Report back to Administration to meet with ATU Local 966 officials regarding transit route cancellations and staffing issues, Administration met with Union representatives to review the matters raised.

During these discussions, it was clarified that the Report to the Quality of Life Standing Committee addressed proposed transit schedule adjustments intended to respond to ongoing staffing challenges and service reliability concerns. The Report did not propose permanent route cancellations.

Accordingly, discussions with the Union focused on:

- Clarification of the proposed changes and how they are designed to reduce uncertainty, manage expectations, and give riders a service they can plan their day around with confidence;
- Potential operational impacts to ATU Local 966 members of the proposed temporary schedule changes;
- Workforce availability, new hire training status and a recruitment effort update; and
- Additional measures to improve service reliability within existing staffing resources.

Administration and the Union exchanged perspectives on these matters and explored potential options to mitigate impacts to Operators while maintaining predictable and sustainable operations for riders. ATU Local 966 officials offered several ideas and suggestions to mitigate the extent of temporary reductions required and the degree of impact on Operators. Administration appreciates the constructive nature of the suggestions provided. Some were already embedded within the proposed temporary approach, and others would depend on voluntary participation by staff. Accordingly, it is not possible to attribute a measurable and sustained staffing increase to these measures to the degree required that would significantly reduce the number of daily cancellations still occurring.

It is the position of Administration that recommending temporary service reductions is necessary to reduce the number of unplanned bus cancellations and improve system reliability for riders. The result is a less frequent but more reliable service for customers to depend on in the short term.

Administration will continue to work collaboratively with the ATU Local 966 officials on strategies to reduce daily unplanned cancellations due to staffing issues while attempting to mitigate the impact on Operators as much as possible.

### ***FINANCIAL IMPLICATION***

The proposed adjustments in this report will result in a net service reduction of approximately 6,900 service hours from May 10 to August 22. As staffing levels continue to recover over the summer and fall, these hours will be redistributed to help address Conventional and Lift+ Specialized reliability, vacation coverage and other operational (ex. staff training) issues. The proposed service frequency adjustments are expected to have a minimal impact on overall revenue, while significantly improving operational efficiency. Any cost savings resulting from these service level adjustments will be captured in the quarterly variance reporting for Transit Services. Favourable variances in Transit operating budgets are transferred into the Capital Transit Reserve Fund.

### ***BACKGROUND***

At the February 10, 2026, Quality of Life Standing Committee, Report 078-2026 – requested the endorsement of the report to temporarily reduce transit service levels given staffing challenges to better manage passenger expectations, help provide a more consistent and predictable service, and achieve improved system reliability.

At the October 7, 2024, Committee of the Whole Meeting, Report No. 352-2024 – introduced the Transforming Transit, establishing the vision that Transit will be the travel option of choice for residents and visitors through the revision of safe, reliable, and convenient service while significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

At the October 4, 2021, Committee of the Whole Meeting, Report No. 141/2021 – provided an update on recovering from conventional service level reductions and returning to normal levels.

At the September 14, 2020, Committee of the Whole Meeting, Report No. 107/2020 – provided an update on adjusting service levels to match fluctuating demand and to make incremental adjustments to gradually return to pre-pandemic service levels.

### ***REFERENCE MATERIAL ATTACHED***

Attachment A – Current vs Proposed Conventional Schedule Framework

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***REPORT SIGNED AND VERIFIED BY***

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02/24/2026 (MM/DD/YEAR)