



## TOWN OF INNISFIL STAFF REPORT

**STAFF REPORT NO:** DSR-079-16

**DATE:** June 15, 2016

**To:** Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Members of Council

**From:** Tim Cane, Manager of Land Use Planning

**Subject:** Demand-Responsive Transit in Innisfil

**Cross Reference:** DSR-143-15

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### RECOMMENDATION:

**THAT Staff issue a Request for Expression of Interest (RFEOI) immediately to solicit information from proponents to provide demand-responsive transit services in Innisfil; and**

**THAT Staff report back to Council in August 2016 on the results of the RFEOI and prior to the issuance of a Request for Proposal (RFP).**

### BACKGROUND:

In September of 2015, a Transit Feasibility Study was completed by MMM. For implementation in 2016, the study recommended that the Town consider a conventional fixed-route bus service to address the current demand for public transit in Innisfil.

The proposed one-bus option (Year 1 cost of \$272,000; 5-year cost of \$945,000) involved hourly service between Alcona, the Innisfil Recreation Complex, and along Yonge St to the Barrie South GO Station.

The two-bus option (Year 1 cost of \$610,000; 5-year cost of \$1,857,000) involved hourly service within a larger area that included Sandy Cove Acres, Alcona, Innisfil Recreation Complex, and along Yonge Street to Lockhart Road and Park Place in Barrie.

When Council considered these options for fixed-route bus service during the 2016 Budget deliberations, it was determined that they would be too costly for the limited level of service that they would provide. Particularly, the one-bus option would not be able to equally service all Innisfil residents and would not provide connections to locations with high transit demand such as Sandy Cove Acres and Tanger Outlet (Cookstown).

During the 2016 Budget deliberations, Staff also presented Council with considerations for demand-responsive approaches that could be explored to more efficiently and innovatively introduce public transit to Innisfil. In response to this presentation, Council directed Staff to form a community advisory committee to assist with further assessing potential demand-responsive transit solutions.

The first meeting of the Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) took place on February 2, 2016. The committee is comprised of a broad range of stakeholders. This meeting was focused on identifying key goals and potential solutions for a successful transit system in Innisfil.

Some of the key words that TAC identified to describe their transit vision for Innisfil included the following:

- Freedom
- Equitable
- Accessible
- Trusted
- Safe
- Progressive
- Technology
- Innovative
- Autonomous
- Economical
- Connected
- Inclusive
- Simple
- Adaptable
- Convenient
- Professional
- Implementable

Overall, TAC indicated that due to the Town's large geography and the distances between destinations, that an "adaptable", "progressive" and "innovative" solution was needed to efficiently address the public transit demand in Innisfil. In aiming to achieve this, a number of potential ride sharing and demand-responsive transit solutions were discussed. TAC also emphasized that there is an immediate need to provide a transit solution to especially address the needs of youth, seniors, commuters (access to GO bus/train stations) and new residents.

#### **ANALYSIS/CONSIDERATION:**

Staff is recommending that a Request for Expression of Interest (RFEOI) be issued to promptly initiate this process and to solicit (through a future RFP) the provision of a pilot demand-responsive transit service on a trial basis. If this trial is successful, the Town could consider a longer term contract with the proponent.

An RFEOI is typically issued to identify and assess options about market availability and interest in providing a good/service. It is different than a Request for Proposal (RFP) as it is not a binding process that results in a contract. Rather, the information obtained may be beneficial to structuring a future RFP.

Though Staff has already received some inquiries from proponents about establishing demand-responsive transit services in Innisfil, it is recommended that the Town solicit interest through a formal RFEOI process. This will set the stage for a future RFP and competitive and transparent procurement process to maximize the community benefits of establishing demand-responsive transit services in Innisfil.

Pending the outcome of the RFEOI, Staff envision a ridesharing service where a proponent would pick up riders as they are requested. Through this partnership, the cost for using the ridesharing service would be similar to what passengers would otherwise pay for traditional bus transit.

Any difference in the cost of the ride between the demand-based service and traditional transit would have to be explored by the Town and Community partners. A demand-based service on a trial basis will give staff the opportunity to gauge public interest and use.

There are a number of key considerations for establishing a successful demand-responsive transit system in Innisfil. In assessing these key considerations through the RFEOI, the Town would be seeking information related to the following:

- Existing fleet of vehicles (cars, vans, mini-buses, etc.) to provide the service and ability to acquire additional vehicles to accommodate demand;
- Technology that allows for rides to be requested by mobile app, phone call, or internet;
- Software that optimizes routing and dispatches drivers as requests are received, in addition to anticipating rider requests to/from frequently travelled locations/routes;
- Passengers would be picked up no more than 30 minutes after requesting a ride;
- Multiple passengers can be picked up and dropped off during trips;
- Riders would have option to be picked up and dropped off at designated “Transit Stops” (perhaps at a lower price) or picked up and dropped off “Door-to-Door” at locations that they specify (perhaps at a higher price)
- Vehicles that are accessible (all or a portion of the fleet)
- Vehicles equipped with bike racks;
- Security screening process for all drivers;
- Insurance coverage;
- Detailed logs and tracking of all trips taken;
- Pricing structure (perhaps based on distance travelled or zones within the Town);
- Ability for riders to purchase monthly passes or multi-ride fare cards (student and seniors discounts);
- Ability to purchase rides at time of request (pre-payment);
- Providing rides to Barrie South GO Station and possibly other specified locations outside of Innisfil
- Hours of operation to optimize connectivity to GO/City of Barrie Transit networks (e.g. 4:30am – 12 am); and
- Future considerations for a fleet of self-driving/autonomous vehicles.

Within the RFEOI, there will be a questionnaire asking the proponent if or how they could address these key elements. The information from the RFEOI will be particularly helpful in determining the level of subsidy and cost to the Town that would be required in order to implement such a demand-responsive service through a future RFP. Staff will also meet with the Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) to provide an update and to receive their input on the results of the RFEOI process.

#### **OPTIONS/ALTERNATIVES:**

Council can adopt the recommendations of this report as they relate to the issuance and timing of the RFEOI and future RFP, or can request Staff to make additional modifications. Council can also provide input on additional considerations for Staff to explore further or identify in the RFEOI.

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATION:**

There are no immediate financial impacts from approving the recommendations of this report. Staff time to facilitate the Transit Advisory Committee and assess demand-responsive transit alternatives is being covered through the funding that was allocated for this purpose in the 2016 Budget. When Staff reports back to Council in August 2016 on the results of the RFEOI and prior to the issuance of the RFP, this forthcoming report will consider the amount of funding required from the Town to support the provision of demand-responsive transit in Innisfil on a trial basis.

**CONCLUSION:**

There is a strong demand for transit as shown in the Town's Transit Feasibility Study as well as public input from other strategic planning initiatives such as the preparation of the Town's new "Our Place" Official Plan. The proposed approach to considering demand-responsive transit services in Innisfil is aligned with Council's direction from the 2016 Budget deliberations. It also supports the "Connect" pillar of the updated Inspiring Innisfil 2020 and its objective to "Create transportation options" for residents.

**PREPARED BY:**

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