



**Township of Centre Wellington**

# **Transit Feasibility Study**

**Final Report**

**May 2026 - 25-1777**

# Table of Contents

## Acronyms, Abbreviations, Definitions

|            |                                                               |           |
|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>1.0</b> | <b>Introduction</b>                                           | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>2.0</b> | <b>Planning Review and Market Assessment</b>                  | <b>3</b>  |
|            | 2.1 Population and Land Use .....                             | 5         |
|            | 2.1.1 Population Centres and Settlement Areas .....           | 5         |
|            | 2.1.2 Population and Employment Distribution and Growth ..... | 6         |
|            | 2.2 Travel Demand and Destinations .....                      | 9         |
|            | 2.2.1 Local Demand .....                                      | 9         |
|            | 2.2.2 Regional Demand .....                                   | 11        |
| <b>3.0</b> | <b>Transportation and Mobility Context</b>                    | <b>13</b> |
|            | 3.1 Regional Service .....                                    | 15        |
|            | 3.1.1 Former Elora-Fergus-Guelph Commuter Service .....       | 15        |
|            | 3.1.2 Guelph Owen Sound Transportation (GOST) .....           | 15        |
|            | 3.1.3 RIDE WELL .....                                         | 16        |
|            | 3.1.4 Private Transportation Operators .....                  | 18        |
|            | 3.1.5 Other Regional Transit Connections .....                | 18        |
|            | 3.2 Local Service .....                                       | 19        |
|            | 3.2.1 Elora and Fergus Downtown Shuttle .....                 | 19        |
|            | 3.2.2 Wellington Transportation Services .....                | 20        |
|            | 3.2.3 Private Transportation Operators .....                  | 20        |
| <b>4.0</b> | <b>Peer Review</b>                                            | <b>22</b> |
|            | 4.1 Service Model and Operation .....                         | 22        |
|            | 4.2 Service Productivity .....                                | 25        |

|            |                                                                |           |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 4.3        | Financial Performance .....                                    | 25        |
| <b>5.0</b> | <b>Ridership Forecast</b>                                      | <b>27</b> |
| 5.1        | Urban Travel Demand .....                                      | 27        |
| 5.2        | Rural Travel Demand.....                                       | 29        |
| 5.3        | Regional Travel Demand .....                                   | 30        |
| <b>6.0</b> | <b>Engagement</b>                                              | <b>33</b> |
| 6.1        | Engagement Activities.....                                     | 33        |
| 6.2        | Round 1 Key Engagement Themes, What We Heard .....             | 36        |
| 6.2.1      | Regional Connection and Key Destinations .....                 | 36        |
| 6.2.2      | Transit Service Gaps .....                                     | 36        |
| <b>7.0</b> | <b>Identified Service Options</b>                              | <b>38</b> |
| 7.1        | Option 1: On-Demand with Fixed-Route Elora – Fergus Link ..... | 38        |
| 7.2        | Option 2: Fixed-Route Network .....                            | 39        |
| 7.3        | Option 3: Hybrid or Mixed Service Models.....                  | 39        |
| 7.4        | Further Service Components .....                               | 40        |
| 7.4.1      | Regional Transit Service .....                                 | 40        |
| 7.4.2      | Specialized Transit.....                                       | 41        |
| <b>8.0</b> | <b>Transit Alternative Evaluation</b>                          | <b>42</b> |
| 8.1        | Evaluation Criteria.....                                       | 42        |
| 8.1.1      | Ridership Potential .....                                      | 43        |
| 8.1.2      | Reliability .....                                              | 44        |
| 8.1.3      | Parking Mitigation .....                                       | 44        |
| 8.1.4      | Multi-modal Integration.....                                   | 44        |
| 8.1.5      | Capital Costs .....                                            | 44        |
| 8.1.6      | Operating Costs .....                                          | 45        |
| 8.1.7      | Ease of Implementation .....                                   | 45        |

|            |                                                              |           |
|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 8.1.8      | Summary .....                                                | 45        |
| <b>9.0</b> | <b>Recommended Service Model</b>                             | <b>46</b> |
| 9.1        | Urban Fixed-Route Transit Recommendation .....               | 46        |
| 9.1.1      | Network Design Principles .....                              | 46        |
| 9.1.2      | Network Route Structure .....                                | 47        |
| 9.1.3      | Proposed Headways.....                                       | 47        |
| 9.1.4      | Route 1A Elora to Salem and Route 1B Elora to Gilkison ..... | 51        |
| 9.1.5      | Route 2 Belsyde.....                                         | 54        |
| 9.1.6      | Route 3 St. David – Farley .....                             | 56        |
| 9.1.7      | Route 4 Gartshore .....                                      | 58        |
| 9.1.8      | Route 5 Scotland .....                                       | 60        |
| 9.2        | On-Demand Transit Recommendation .....                       | 62        |
| 9.3        | Regional Transit Recommendation .....                        | 62        |
| 9.4        | Specialized Transit Recommendation .....                     | 65        |
| 9.5        | Fare Structure Recommendation.....                           | 65        |
| 9.5.1      | Urban Fares .....                                            | 66        |
| 9.5.2      | Rural Fares.....                                             | 66        |
| 9.5.3      | Regional Transit Service Fares .....                         | 66        |
| 9.5.4      | Transfers and Fare Integration.....                          | 67        |
| 9.5.5      | Monthly Fares .....                                          | 67        |
| 9.5.6      | Concession Fares and Affordable Pass Program.....            | 68        |
| 9.5.7      | Summary of Recommended Fares .....                           | 68        |
| 9.6        | Round 2 Key Engagement Themes, What We Heard .....           | 69        |
| 9.6.1      | Route Preferences.....                                       | 70        |
| 9.6.2      | Fare Expectations .....                                      | 70        |
| 9.6.3      | Other Key Comments and Suggestions.....                      | 70        |

|             |                                                           |           |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>10.0</b> | <b>Phasing Plan</b>                                       | <b>71</b> |
| 10.1        | Phase 1 .....                                             | 71        |
| 10.1.1      | Urban Transit Service .....                               | 71        |
| 10.1.2      | RIDE WELL .....                                           | 71        |
| 10.1.3      | Regional Service .....                                    | 71        |
| 10.1.4      | Infrastructure .....                                      | 72        |
| 10.2        | Phase 2 .....                                             | 72        |
| 10.2.1      | Urban Transit Service .....                               | 72        |
| 10.2.2      | Regional Service .....                                    | 72        |
| 10.2.3      | RIDE WELL .....                                           | 72        |
| 10.3        | Phase 3 .....                                             | 73        |
| 10.3.1      | Urban Transit Service .....                               | 73        |
| 10.3.2      | Regional Service .....                                    | 73        |
| 10.4        | Summary .....                                             | 73        |
| <b>11.0</b> | <b>Operating Plan and Budget</b>                          | <b>74</b> |
| 11.1        | Transit Network Gross Operating Costs.....                | 74        |
| 11.2        | Administrative Costs .....                                | 76        |
| 11.3        | Financial Plan.....                                       | 76        |
| 11.4        | External Funding Opportunities .....                      | 78        |
| 11.4.1      | Ontario Transit Investment Fund.....                      | 79        |
| 11.4.2      | Dedicated Gas Tax for Public Transportation Program ..... | 80        |
| 11.4.3      | Canada Public Transit Fund (CPTF) .....                   | 81        |
| 11.4.4      | Development Charges .....                                 | 82        |
| <b>12.0</b> | <b>Capital Asset Plan</b>                                 | <b>83</b> |
| 12.1        | Fleet Capital Costs .....                                 | 83        |
| 12.2        | Bus Stop Infrastructure .....                             | 86        |
| 12.3        | Proposed Transit Terminal .....                           | 88        |

|                                                                          |                                      |           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| 12.4                                                                     | Capital Phasing Plan .....           | 88        |
| 12.5                                                                     | Development Charges .....            | 89        |
| 12.5.1                                                                   | Population and Ridership Growth..... | 90        |
| 12.5.2                                                                   | Growth Related Capital Summary.....  | 91        |
| 12.5.3                                                                   | Benefit to Existing and Growth ..... | 92        |
| <b>13.0</b>                                                              | <b>Governance</b>                    | <b>94</b> |
| <b>14.0</b>                                                              | <b>Implementation Plan</b>           | <b>97</b> |
| 14.1                                                                     | Pre-Launch.....                      | 97        |
| 14.2                                                                     | Service Launch.....                  | 98        |
| <b>List of Figures</b>                                                   |                                      |           |
| Figure 1: Population Centres in Centre Wellington .....                  |                                      | 6         |
| Figure 2: Housing and Employment Distribution in Centre Wellington ..... |                                      | 8         |
| Figure 3: Key Destinations in Centre Wellington .....                    |                                      | 10        |
| Figure 4: Existing Public Transit Options in Centre Wellington .....     |                                      | 14        |
| Figure 5: Proposed Phase 1 and 2 Urban Transit Network .....             |                                      | 48        |
| Figure 6: Proposed Phase 3 Urban Transit Network .....                   |                                      | 49        |
| Figure 7: Proposed Route 1A Elora to Salem .....                         |                                      | 52        |
| Figure 8: Proposed Route 1B Elora to Gilkison .....                      |                                      | 53        |
| Figure 9: Proposed Route 2 Belsyde .....                                 |                                      | 55        |
| Figure 10: Proposed Route 3 St. David – Farley.....                      |                                      | 57        |
| Figure 11: Proposed Route 4 Gartshore .....                              |                                      | 59        |
| Figure 12: Proposed Route 5 Scotland.....                                |                                      | 61        |
| Figure 13: Proposed Regional Route, Fergus to Guelph .....               |                                      | 64        |

|                                                                                 |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Figure 14: Example of a Wheelchair Accessible 20-Passenger Minibus.....         | 84 |
| Figure 15: Example of an Accessible Mini-Van Used for Specialized Transit ..... | 85 |

## List of Tables

|                                                                                    |    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Table 1: Planning Policy Review Themes .....                                       | 3  |
| Table 2: Population and Employment Growth .....                                    | 7  |
| Table 3: TTS Origin-Destination Daily Demand (Internal to Centre Wellington) ..... | 9  |
| Table 4: TTS Origin-Destination Daily Demand (External to Centre Wellington) ..... | 11 |
| Table 5: RIDE WELL Trips from September 2024 to September 2025.....                | 18 |
| Table 6: Annual Ridership, Elora Fergus Downtown Shuttle .....                     | 20 |
| Table 7: Peer Municipality Service Metrics .....                                   | 23 |
| Table 8: Peer Municipality Financial Metrics .....                                 | 24 |
| Table 9: Key Ridership Benchmarks of Smaller Peer Agencies.....                    | 27 |
| Table 10: Key Ridership Benchmarks of Larger Peer Agencies.....                    | 28 |
| Table 11: Estimated Urban Transit Trips.....                                       | 29 |
| Table 12: Estimated Annual Rural Transit Ridership .....                           | 30 |
| Table 13: Daily Regional Transit Trip Demand (Weekday) Using 2% Mode Share.....    | 31 |
| Table 14: Estimated Annual Regional Transit Trips to Guelph .....                  | 32 |
| Table 15: Summary of Community Engagement Activities .....                         | 33 |
| Table 16: Summary of Transit Options .....                                         | 42 |
| Table 17: Service Alternative Evaluation Criteria .....                            | 43 |
| Table 18: Urban Transit Alternative Evaluation.....                                | 43 |
| Table 19: Proposed Headway Implementation – Fixed-Routes .....                     | 50 |

|                                                                                               |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Table 20: Proposed Hours of Operation – Urban Transit Fixed Routes .....                      | 50 |
| Table 21: Recommended Fare Structure .....                                                    | 69 |
| Table 22: Estimated Transit Network Annual Service Costs.....                                 | 75 |
| Table 23: Ancillary Operating Costs .....                                                     | 76 |
| Table 24: Five-Year Operating Cost Summary (Local Conventional and Specialized Transit) ..... | 77 |
| Table 25: Five-Year Operating Cost Summary (Regional Service) .....                           | 78 |
| Table 26: Vehicle Requirements .....                                                          | 86 |
| Table 27: Bus Stop Installation Costs per Year .....                                          | 87 |
| Table 28: Capital Infrastructure Cost Plan .....                                              | 89 |
| Table 29: Centre Wellington Population and Ridership Forecast 2026 to 2051 .....              | 90 |
| Table 30: 10-Year 2026 to 2036 Capital Plan.....                                              | 91 |
| Table 31: Benefit Apportionment Calculation .....                                             | 93 |
| Table 32: Service Delivery Ownership of Transit Services .....                                | 94 |

## Appendices

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- A Round 1 Engagement Activities
- B Capital Plan Project Sheets

## Acronyms, Abbreviations, Definitions

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|            |                                                          |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| AODA       | <i>Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act</i> |
| BIA        | Business Improvement Area                                |
| CPTF       | Canada Public Transit Fund                               |
| CWDHS      | Centre Wellington District High School                   |
| DC         | development charge                                       |
| DCA        | <i>Development Charges Act</i>                           |
| GOST       | Guelph Owen Sound Transit                                |
| GRT        | Grand River Transit                                      |
| HCAC       | Healthy Communities Advisory Committee                   |
| IASR       | Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation            |
| OTIF       | Ontario Transit Investment Fund                          |
| LRT        | light rail transit                                       |
| PC Connect | Perth County Connect                                     |
| RFP        | request for proposals                                    |
| RTSF       | Rural Transit Solutions Fund                             |
| SMART      | Saugeen Mobility and Regional Transit                    |
| Township   | Township of Centre Wellington                            |
| TTS        | Transportation Tomorrow Survey                           |

# Introduction

The Township of Centre Wellington (Township) is a growing municipality, characterized by a busy urban centre (the communities of Elora, Fergus, and Salem) with many neighbourhoods, businesses and services, surrounded by a large rural and agricultural area. The Township is in Wellington County, located between the City of Guelph to the south, Kitchener and Waterloo to the west, Orangeville to the east, and Grey and Dufferin Counties to the north.

The Township has the largest population in Wellington County (34,100), which is forecasted to nearly double by 2051. This growth will see an increase in demand for sustainable transportation options, particularly for individuals that do not have access to a private automobile. To help manage current and future demand for sustainable transportation locally and to these adjacent urban centres, the Township has undertaken a Transit Feasibility Study.

Public transit can support the independence of residents with limited access to personal vehicles, strengthen local and regional access for commuters and residents, and manage the growing demand on local infrastructure like parking. While the Township has limited transit in place today, the current systems are disjointed and do not have sufficient capacity or coverage to accommodate the needs of a growing municipality.

The purpose of the study is to assess the feasibility of expanding the following transit services and recommend the best public transit option for the Township:

- Local transit services complementing the existing RIDE WELL service provided by the County in Centre Wellington and the Downtown Shuttle service provided by the Township in Elora and Fergus;
- Enhanced regional connections to Guelph and Wellington North (Arthur and Mount Forest), building on the Guelph Owen Sound Transportation transit route provided by the City of Owen Sound, and exploring new connections to cities such as Kitchener and Orangeville;
- Better accessibility for residents with disabilities and seniors; and
- Accommodating population and tourism growth across the Township.

This includes an assessment of the role and responsibility of the Township and the County of Wellington to provide transit and a financial and implementation plan, which identifies the costs, funding opportunities and ridership projections for the recommended service model.

## 2.0

## Planning Review and Market Assessment

The future public transportation network must align with existing plans and policies. Planning documents inform the growth, built form, and population and employment distribution within the Township, all of which directly impact the potential expansion of a transit service. Community planning and transit planning work together to accommodate municipal growth while maintaining key characteristics that residents and tourists appreciate about a smaller community such as Centre Wellington. **Table 1** summarizes the relevant planning and policy documents, and how they both relate and will help inform this transit feasibility study.

**Table 1: Planning Policy Review Themes**

| Theme                            | Topics and Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Document                                                          |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Growth</b>                    | Manage growth while enhancing the community's unique character.                                                                                                                                                                                          | Centre Wellington Strategic Plan, 2023 to 2026                    |
| <b>Growth</b>                    | Align road construction with transit and active transportation improvements.                                                                                                                                                                             | Centre Wellington Transportation Master Plan, 2019                |
| <b>Growth</b>                    | Direct growth to urban centres and downtowns to make public transit viable.                                                                                                                                                                              | Wellington County Official Plan, rev. May 2025                    |
| <b>Tourism</b>                   | Transition the downtown Shuttle Bus from pilot to a permanent program.                                                                                                                                                                                   | Centre Wellington 2025 Business Plan                              |
| <b>Existing Mobility Network</b> | The absence of transit limits uptake of walking and cycling in Elora and Fergus.                                                                                                                                                                         | Centre Wellington Active Transportation and Mobility Plan. Part 1 |
| <b>Existing Mobility Network</b> | The active transportation network should be integrated with public transit.                                                                                                                                                                              | Wellington County Active Transportation Plan, 2012                |
| <b>Transit</b>                   | Consider transit's role in providing regional connections (primarily to Guelph), supporting travel to popular destinations in Elora and Fergus, and providing options for youth and seniors. Build support for transit at the Township and County level. | Centre Wellington Transportation Master Plan, 2019                |

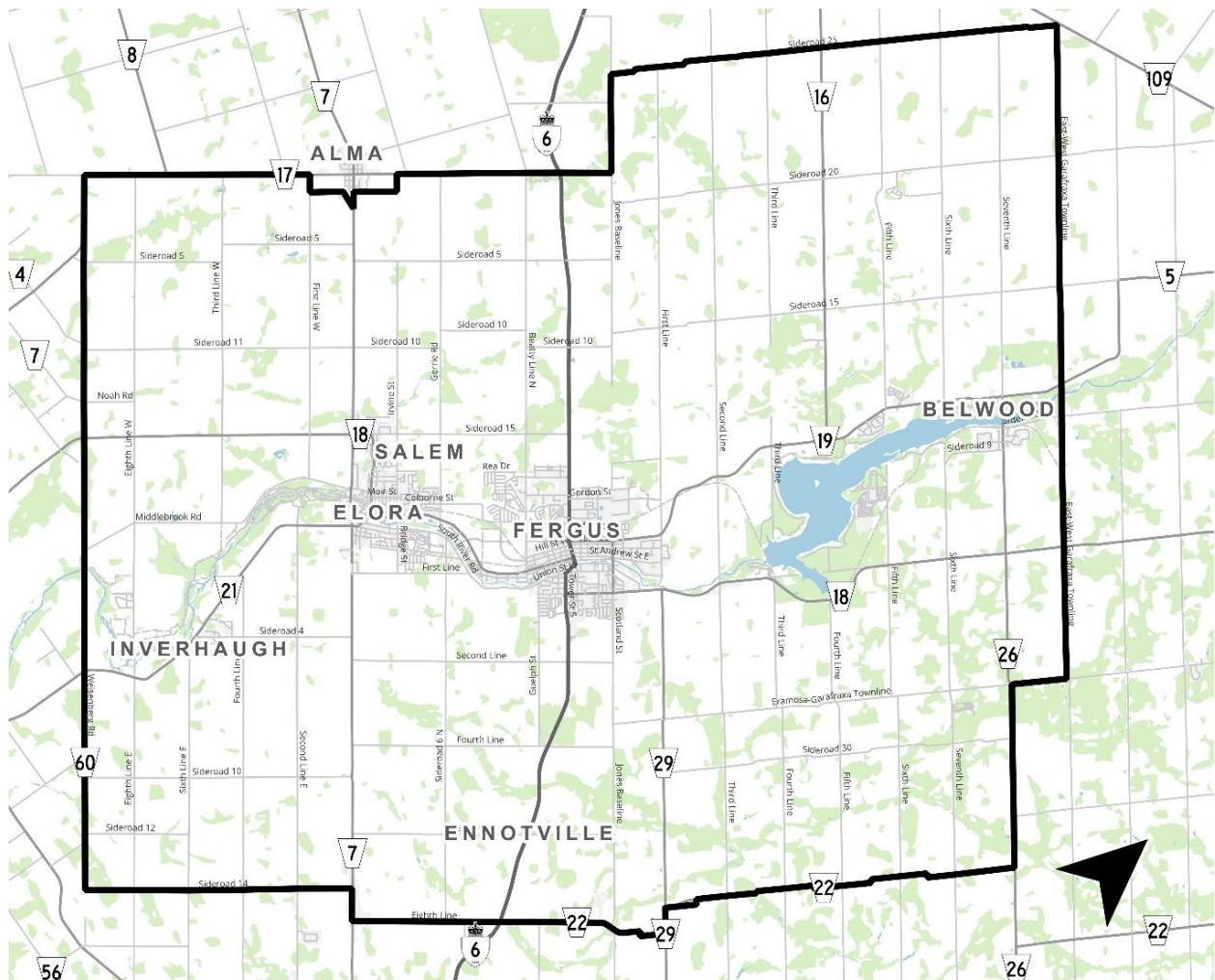
| Theme                       | Topics and Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Document                                                                      |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Transit</b>              | Strong community demand for public transit and/or permanent shuttle service.                                                                                                                                            | Centre Wellington Active Transportation and Mobility Plan. Part 3             |
| <b>Transit</b>              | Shuttle bus program has received widespread approval. Parking strategy should leverage shuttle.                                                                                                                         | Municipal Downtown Parking Strategy                                           |
| <b>Transit</b>              | Encourage and participate in studies and programs to plan and implement inter-urban bus and micro transit services that connect Guelph to other nearby urban centres.                                                   | Guelph Transportation Master Plan, 2022                                       |
| <b>Economic Development</b> | Work with partners to expand and advocate for increased local, regional, and inter-urban transit connections, and into Guelph and Kitchener-Waterloo.                                                                   | Township of Centre Wellington Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, 2025 |
| <b>Economic Development</b> | Current public and private transit options are insufficient to support reliable commuting for employment purposes.                                                                                                      | Township of Centre Wellington Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, 2025 |
| <b>Economic Development</b> | Transit is considered a key piece of infrastructure to enable economic development and was identified as a significant barrier for those looking to access employment opportunities and education, especially youth.    | Township of Centre Wellington Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, 2025 |
| <b>Economic Development</b> | Enhanced transit connections provides visitors with more options to access the community without relying on personal vehicles, helping to alleviate congestion in high-traffic areas through a “park and ride” system.  | Township of Centre Wellington Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, 2025 |
| <b>Economic Development</b> | Enhancing transit accessibility is crucial to support employment, especially amongst youth, and for workforce mobility, especially for connecting resident to regional employment hubs and post-secondary institutions. | Township of Centre Wellington Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, 2025 |

## 2.1 Population and Land Use

### 2.1.1 Population Centres and Settlement Areas

The Township of Centre Wellington features a mix of rural and urban areas (**Figure 1**), with Fergus, Elora and Salem being the most densely populated communities. Outside the central area of the Township, there are rural communities of varying sizes, including some seasonal communities. The primary urban area consists of the following communities:

- **Fergus** is the largest population centre in the Township and serves as a focal point of demand with many major commercial, service, and grocer destinations. While older neighbourhoods feature a traditional gridded street network, new subdivisions are more car-oriented.
- **Elora and Salem** are located west of Fergus, with more residential communities compared to the mixed land uses in Fergus. Downtown Elora has significant tourism draws, with many small businesses, artist studios, and events occurring in the town centre. The south end of Elora is developing quickly, with major industrial expansion occurring and much of the area designated as employment area growth lands.
- **Aboyne** is a hamlet between Elora and Fergus and is home to the Groves Memorial Community Hospital and the Wellington County Library, Museum and Archives. These are key destinations that are not located near residential areas but are centrally located in the urban area and could benefit from regular transportation access.

**Figure 1: Population Centres in Centre Wellington**

Other populated settlements in the rural parts of the Township are Belwood, Inverhaugh and Ennotville. Belwood is the largest of these communities, however all three have relatively populations with minimal travel demand.

While it is not within the boundaries of Centre Wellington, the community of Alma is located directly at the Township boundary in the neighbouring Township of Mapleton and may have some travel demand to the urban area.

### 2.1.2 Population and Employment Distribution and Growth

The Township is projected to experience significant growth in both population and employment over the coming decades. This growth, shown in **Table 2**, is largely concentrated within Fergus, Elora and Salem.

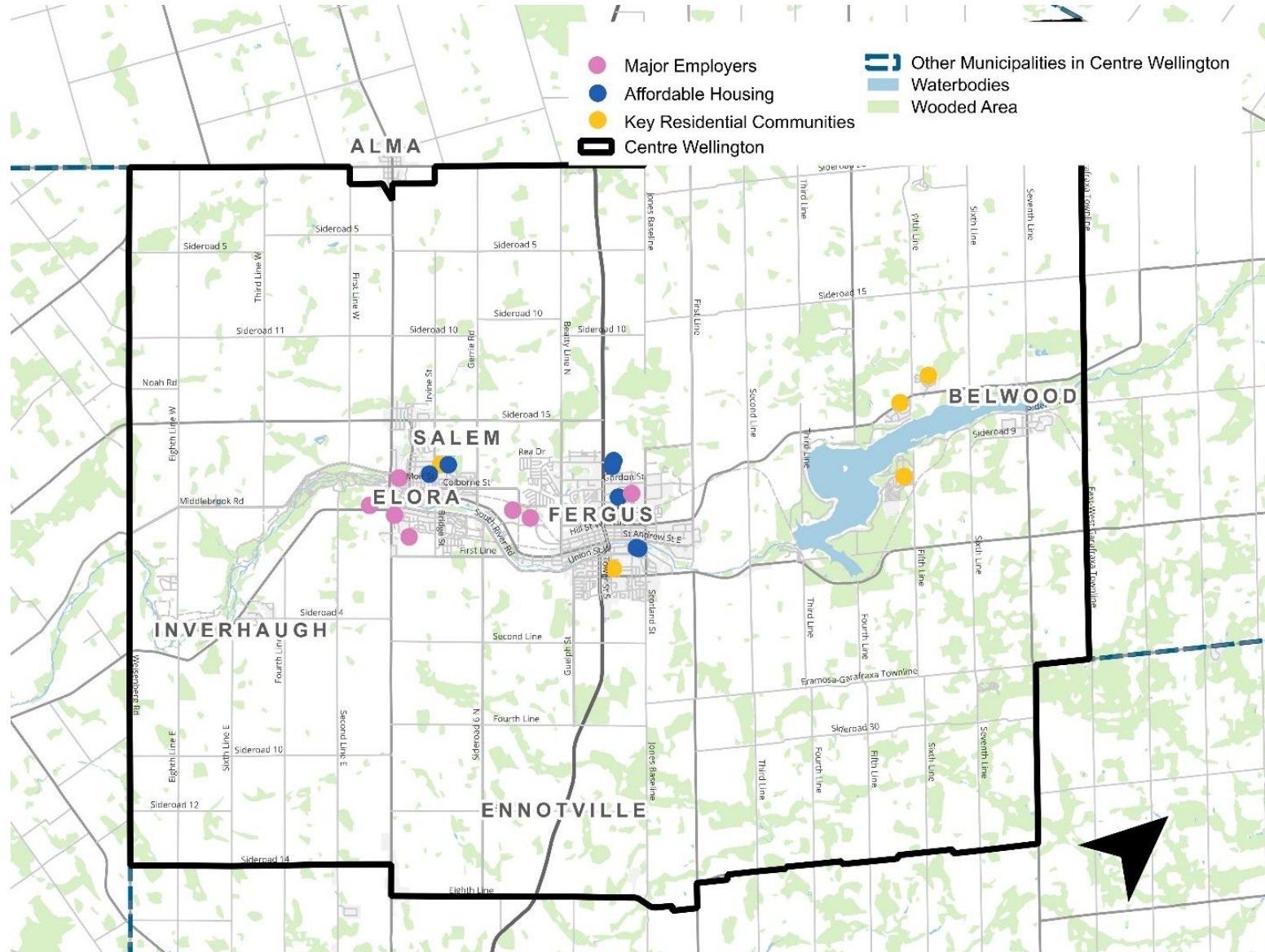
**Table 2: Population and Employment Growth**

| <b>Settlement Area</b> | <b>Population (2021)</b> | <b>Population (2051)</b> | <b>Population Growth (2021 to 2051)</b> | <b>Employment (2021)</b> | <b>Employment (2051)</b> |
|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Elora - Salem          | 7,800                    | 14,100                   | 81%                                     | Not available            | Not available            |
| Fergus                 | 19,100                   | 36,300                   | 90%                                     | Not available            | Not available            |
| Outside Urban Centres  | 7,200                    | 7,800                    | 8%                                      | Not available            | Not available            |
| <b>Total Township</b>  | <b>34,100</b>            | <b>58,200</b>            | <b>71%</b>                              | <b>12,200</b>            | <b>25,100</b>            |

Within Fergus, Elora and Salem, the population is fairly dispersed throughout the urban area. Employment areas are largely concentrated in the two downtowns, in south Elora along First Line, and in the Dickson Drive and Glengarry Crescent employment area of Fergus.

Affordable housing in the Township is largely provided by the County of Wellington through various organizations throughout Elora and Fergus. **Figure 2** shows the locations of affordable housing, select residential communities (including those outside of population centres and seniors' communities), and major employers.

### Figure 2: Housing and Employment Distribution in Centre Wellington



## 2.2 Travel Demand and Destinations

As Centre Wellington is located nearby to several municipalities, analysis was undertaken to better understand what kind of travel demand exists from the Township internally and externally.

### 2.2.1 Local Demand

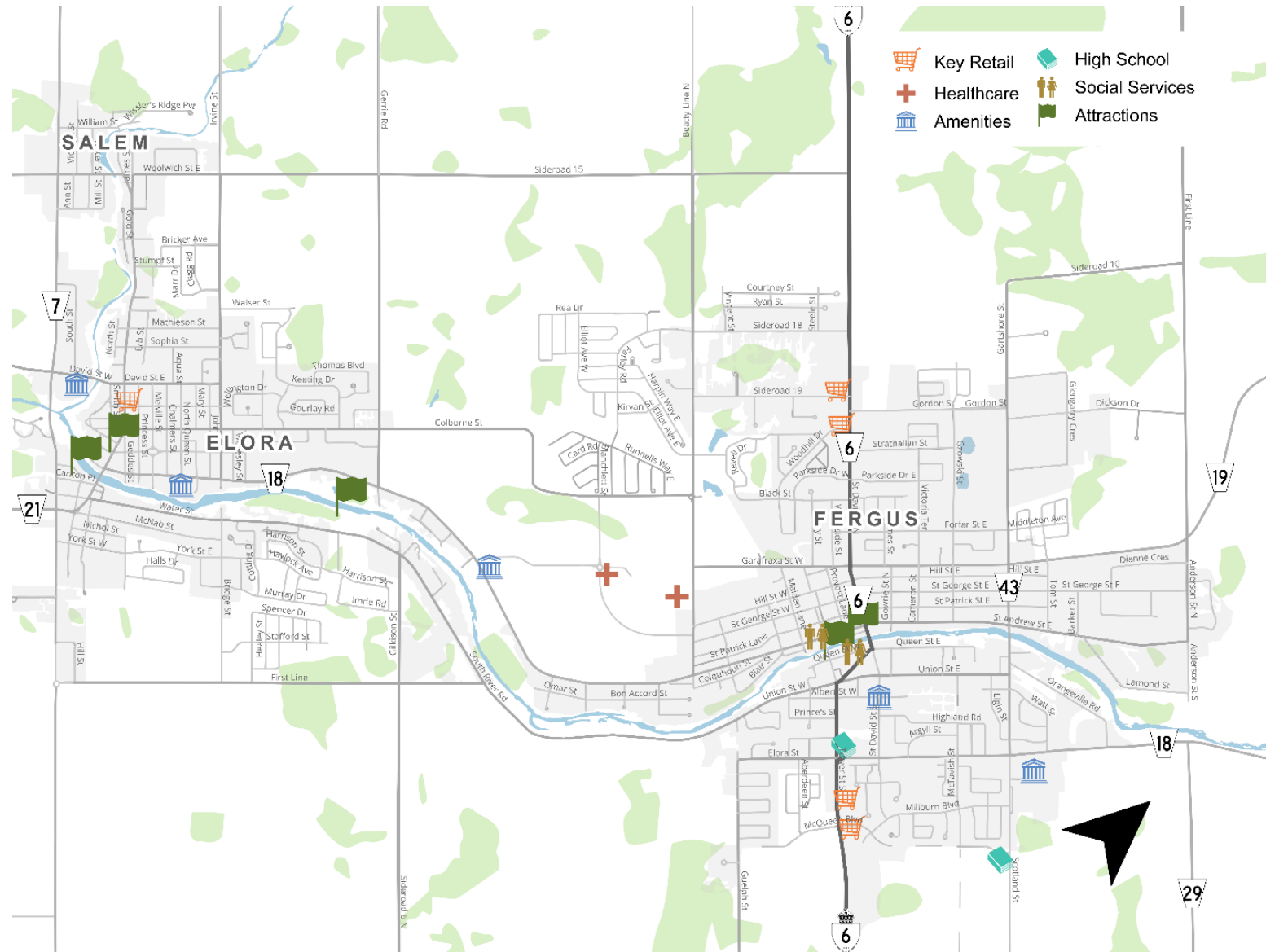
An analysis of data from the Transportation Tomorrow Survey (TTS), 2022 revealed that the strongest internal demand for travel exists within Fergus by a significant margin, followed by the demand for travel between Elora and Fergus (**Table 3**). This confirms Fergus as the focal point of demand and the preferred location for a multi-modal transportation terminal.

**Table 3: TTS Origin-Destination Daily Demand (Internal to Centre Wellington)**

| <b>Origin (down) and Destination (across)</b> | <b>Elora</b> | <b>Fergus</b> | <b>Belwood</b> | <b>Aboyne</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|
| Elora                                         | 3,920        | 3,582         | No trips       | 380           |
| Fergus                                        | 3,703        | 21,744        | Under 100      | 1,129         |
| Belwood                                       | No trips     | Under 100     | No trips       | Under 100     |
| Aboyne                                        | 306          | 1,186         | Under 100      | No trips      |

Key local destinations which generate local trips, including essential services, Township amenities, high-demand tourist attractions, and retail areas, have been detailed in **Figure 3**.

Figure 3: Key Destinations in Centre Wellington



## 2.2.2

## Regional Demand

**Table 4** includes daily external trips made to surrounding regional destinations. Note that the data is assumed to be approximate regular weekday travel demand and that this TTS dataset does not include data in Wellington County north of Centre Wellington (i.e., Mapleton, Wellington North, and Minto). Travel to these destinations will be considered based on the relative number of trips using existing transit options.

Guelph has by far the strongest external demand from the Township. Waterloo and Kitchener are also notable destinations, but there is less travel demand than to Guelph. Travel between the urban area in Centre Wellington and Guelph is likely the most viable external connection for scheduled transit service and should build upon existing services to strengthen this connection.

**Table 4: TTS Origin-Destination Daily Demand (External to Centre Wellington)**

| Origin (down) and Destination (across) | Guelph       | Waterloo     | Kitchener  | Orangeville | Elmira     |
|----------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| Elora                                  | 2,385        | 458          | 396        | 168         | Under 100  |
| Fergus                                 | 3,804        | 781          | 401        | 246         | 189        |
| Belwood                                | Under 100    | Under 100    | Under 100  | Under 100   | Under 100  |
| Aboyne                                 | 123          | Under 100    | Under 100  | No trips    | No trips   |
| <b>Total</b>                           | <b>6,323</b> | <b>1,259</b> | <b>901</b> | <b>425</b>  | <b>297</b> |

Guelph attracts trips from both urban and rural areas for shopping and retail, social services, employment, healthcare, education (especially the University of Guelph) and connections to regional transportation (including GO Transit service).

The Region of Waterloo is the next closest major urban area to the Township, providing many of the same amenities as Guelph including post-secondary opportunities (University of Waterloo, Wilfred Laurier University, and Conestoga College). The Region of Waterloo, however, offers more opportunity for extended travel, with an international airport and additional inter-city coach bus connections towards London and Southwestern Ontario.

Other municipalities, including Orangeville, are located in the vicinity of Centre Wellington, each with their own unique places of employment, amenities, retail, and recreational destinations. While these are important, they do not have a significant draw to/from Centre Wellington.

## 3.0

## Transportation and Mobility Context

With Centre Wellington being a growing community faced with major population and business growth, public transit must be future-ready. Currently, there are multiple transportation organizations providing public transportation services including RIDE WELL, the Guelph Owen Sound Transit (GOST) route, the Fergus Elora Downtown Shuttle program and the Wellington Transportation Service. Analysis of data provided by these services including demand, travel patterns, ridership and population coverage, can help to identify both the unmet transportation needs and opportunities for collaboration and expansion to maintain and improve mode share for public transit. Shown below in **Figure 4** are the existing fixed-route public transit options in Centre Wellington (GOST and the Fergus Elora Downtown Shuttle).



### 3.1 Regional Service

#### 3.1.1 Former Elora-Fergus-Guelph Commuter Service

From the 1970s until 2022, Elliot Coach Lines, a school transportation operator, operated a commuter bus service between Elora, Fergus and Guelph. This bus service ended as the costs became too high relative to the fares collected on the route, and it was no longer viable for a private operator to provide the service without external assistance. The route departed Elora at 7:25 AM, making stops in Fergus and along Highway 6 to Guelph; the return trip left the University of Guelph at 5:30 PM. This service was operated with a school bus and served key destinations in Guelph like Downtown and the University of Guelph. The longevity of this service indicates potential viability for expanded fixed-route connections between Guelph and Centre Wellington, especially in the context of commuter demand.

#### 3.1.2 Guelph Owen Sound Transportation (GOST)

Guelph Owen Sound Transportation (GOST) is a fixed-route service provided by the City of Owen Sound, with the service contracted to Voyago Transit. This service has been operating since August 2020, when funding was received through the provincial Community Transportation Grant program. Since 2020, GOST has provided two round-trips per day between Owen Sound and Guelph Central Station, with stops in Elora and Fergus, providing one round-trip in the morning and one round-trip in the afternoon. Fares to travel the full length between Guelph and Owen Sound are \$20, while one-way fares between Elora or Fergus and Guelph are \$5.

In Elora, the bus stop is located south of the Grand River from Downtown Elora, and in Fergus, the bus stop is at the Centre Wellington Sportsplex. These stops are located along the primary travel corridors for the route but should be assessed as part of this study to ensure good connectivity between GOST and potential local transit services.

GOST ridership has grown year-over year, with recent ridership statistics showing an increasing number of passengers using the service, including in Elora and Fergus. In 2024, there were a total of 1,627 trips to or from Fergus and 1,442 trips to or from Elora, representing a combined 3,069 trips to and from Centre Wellington. On a daily basis, this translates to an average of 8 to 9 trips per day. From January to August 2025,

2,060 trips were taken to and from Centre Wellington despite weather interruptions in the winter and is generally on track to meet or exceed 2024 ridership.

GOST features an ongoing online service survey which allows individuals to leave feedback regarding the GOST service. Key feedback themes include the following:

- The stop location in Fergus is inconvenient without local public transportation;
- Riders wish there were more trips earlier and later in the day;
- Passengers wish for better connections to GO Transit;
- There are concerns around stop visibility, with the Elora and Fergus stops being located as a deviation off of the main route;
- Fares are only able to be paid in exact change which can be inconvenient, and there are no integrated fares with Guelph Transit or Owen Sound Transit;
- Early running buses can be an issue in Elora and Fergus, which can leave riders stranded;
- Some trips during periods of high-demand can be standing-room only or can leave passengers behind;
- An additional stop in Guelph at the Woodlawn Smart Centres would be convenient;
- Riders depend on this service to connect to the entire Greater Golden Horseshoe, and provincial, transportation network; not only to get to Guelph; and
- There are significant equity impacts of this service, with many low-income individuals or people with disabilities using the service.

While this route provides an essential service along the Highway 6 corridor supporting the identified demand between Centre Wellington and Guelph, its trip times limit the usability of the service for commuters, and the lack of live tracking, non-cash payment options, and inconvenient stop locations limits how user-friendly the service is.

The service is also not integrated well with the RIDE WELL service, meaning very few people use RIDE WELL to connect to GOST. One of the other issues has been limited promotion about the service, which may prevent the service from achieving higher ridership.

### 3.1.3

#### RIDE WELL

RIDE WELL is an on-demand transit service provided by Wellington County across all municipalities of the county, including connections to the City of Guelph, where there is

significant ridership demand. RIDE WELL provides regional and local transportation connections for residents in Centre Wellington.

This service began in 2019 through the provincial Community Transportation Grant program, and since that time a significant proportion of the trips have originated or terminated in Centre Wellington. Wellington County is a vast area, and the service operates with limited resources, meaning that vehicles are often stretched thin across the County. This situation limits practical access to the service, particularly if long-distance trips have been requested. Recent changes to the program have brought more vehicles online, introduced integration with Uber to improve access and availability, and limited the ability to request long trips to maintain vehicles locally. Currently, there is one vehicle that is focused on Centre Wellington, and a second accessible vehicle that services Centre Wellington, but operates across the County and into Guelph.

Fares for this on-demand service are set at a rate of \$0.60 per kilometre per person with a minimum fare of \$5 and a maximum fare of \$40. These costs are higher than those of peer agencies operating similar services, which has meant that most trips are taken by individuals making essential journeys for social services, groceries, and medical appointments as opposed to more regular trips to employment or education. However, the cost is set to provide a more affordable alternative to taxi trips. For trips within Fergus and Elora, the majority of fares would be between \$5 and \$7.

**Table 5** outlines the number of trips between the various areas of Centre Wellington and neighbouring communities from September 2024 to September 2025. The strongest trip demand exists from Fergus, including both trips within Fergus and to other areas of the Township. Elora and Salem also have substantial trip demand, which is primarily directed to and from Fergus. External to the Township, demand between Guelph and Fergus is very high. Demand to Arthur and Alma are also present to some degree, but at a much lower level than to Guelph or most of the other areas within the Township. Additional trips that cannot be accommodated using RIDE WELL instead use Uber as a fallback. Most of these trips were between Fergus and Elora (257 trips), within Fergus (176 trips), or between Fergus and Guelph (97 trips). These patterns mirror the most popular trips on RIDE WELL. It should be noted that the Uber trips do not represent the full use of this service, rather, only those booked through the RIDE WELL app.

**Table 5: RIDE WELL Trips from September 2024 to September 2025**

| <b>Community</b>        | <b>Elora and Salem</b> | <b>Fergus</b> | <b>Belwood</b> | <b>Aboyne</b> | <b>Rural Centre Wellington</b> |
|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|--------------------------------|
| Elora and Salem         | 108                    | --            | --             | --            | --                             |
| Fergus                  | 1,688                  | 2,839         | --             | --            | --                             |
| Belwood                 | 5                      | 72            | 0              | --            | --                             |
| Aboyne                  | 99                     | 453           | 1              | 2             | --                             |
| Rural Centre Wellington | 57                     | 681           | 0              | 19            | 57                             |
| Arthur                  | 6                      | 140           | 0              | 14            | 0                              |
| Mount Forest            | 0                      | 23            | 0              | 1             | 0                              |
| Guelph                  | 356                    | 1,200         | 3              | 77            | 142                            |
| Alma                    | 12                     | 75            | 0              | 2             | 0                              |
| Other Wellington County | 41                     | 269           | 0              | 13            | 9                              |

#### 3.1.4 Private Transportation Operators

There are no longer any private coach lines operating within the Township, with the services instead being replaced by RIDE WELL and the GOST route. Until February 2026, TOK Coachlines operated a route between Vaughan and Southampton, with three round trips per week. This service made a stop in Arthur, to the north of Centre Wellington, in the Township of Wellington North.

#### 3.1.5 Other Regional Transit Connections

The nearby urban areas of Guelph and the Region of Waterloo each operate their own local transit services.

Guelph Transit provides fixed-route services around the city, connecting to most urbanized areas of the city. The system's major hub is located at Guelph Central GO Station, where a connection to the GO Transit Kitchener Line is possible. Regional GO Transit bus services also operate from this terminal.

Grand River Transit provides service in the three urban municipalities of the Region of Waterloo (Kitchener, Cambridge, and Waterloo), and the townships located in the region. GRT service extends towards Centre Wellington as far as Elmira, where fixed-route service is provided every 30 minutes to Conestoga Station.

If regular transit connections were to be provided between Centre Wellington and surrounding urban centres, as has occurred in the past by private companies to serve commuter travel, central transfer locations with good connections to other services should be prioritized, and some form of fare integration should be explored. Connections with regional and inter-city services, like VIA Rail and GO Transit, are also crucial to allow residents access to the broader regional, and provincial, transit network. VIA Rail and GO Transit provide service to both Guelph Central Station and Kitchener Central Station, which are both important multi-modal transportation hubs in the regional transit network.

## 3.2 Local Service

### 3.2.1 Elora and Fergus Downtown Shuttle

The Elora and Fergus Downtown Shuttle began operation in 2022 as a seasonal, tourism-focused service run by the Township of Centre Wellington to help address parking capacity issues in-town. The Township contracts operations of the service to Voyago Transit, who owns the vehicle and manages day-to-day service operations. The service is free for riders with no fare charged.

The service has since been expanded since inception, and currently operates annually on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays between mid-May and mid-September, from approximately 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM. The shuttle departs the Grand River Raceway in Elora hourly, travelling in a loop to the Centre Wellington Sportsplex and back, stopping at Downtown Elora, the Elora Centre for the Arts/Bissell Park, the Wellington County Museum and Archives, and Downtown Fergus. Holiday service is provided to help accommodate tourist demand in the Township, which is typically higher on these days.

While the primary market for the shuttle is tourists, it is estimated that approximately 30% of riders are locals who use the service to get between different points in-town, and between Elora and Fergus. Some residents have been frequent users of the service to get to groceries, medical appointments, and access other services between Elora and Fergus.

Use of the service has increased significantly since its inception (**Table 6**). The continued growth is partially attributed to the addition of Friday service in 2025. The most

frequented stops in 2025 are MacDonald Square (Downtown Elora) and Fergus Market (Downtown Fergus), suggesting an importance in walkability to nearby destinations.

**Table 6: Annual Ridership, Elora Fergus Downtown Shuttle**

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Ridership</b> |
|-------------|------------------|
| 2022        | 139              |
| 2023        | 1,469            |
| 2024        | 2,322            |
| 2025        | 2,430            |

This service cannot accommodate all passengers as the vehicle being used is not accessible. Trips for individuals requiring mobility are accommodated by the Township, who will book an accessible taxicab for the passenger.

In 2025, the program was funded in part by several community organizations and businesses, including the County of Wellington, Elora Business Improvement Area (BIA), Fergus BIA, Grand River Agricultural Society, the Centre Wellington Chamber of Commerce, and Wrighthaven Homes.

### 3.2.2 Wellington Transportation Services

The Community Resource Centre of North and Centre Wellington operates pre-booked transportation for low-income individuals with no other means of transportation and who are not eligible to use other service providers. This service is provided free of charge using volunteer drivers who have their mileage reimbursed by the County. The focus of the service is to provide essential transportation to appointments, food banks, educational programs, employment and work programs, and essential shopping trips. Service operates on weekdays from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm and is pre-booked at least two days in advance.

### 3.2.3 Private Transportation Operators

Within Centre Wellington, the primary private transportation services are local taxi companies and Uber service. These services complement the RIDE WELL service in the County for meeting local demand, and in Uber's case, trips are also integrated into the RIDE WELL booking platform. While these services do accommodate some travel demand within the Township, there can be reliability and availability issues.

Additionally, the services are expensive for many individuals who may otherwise use public transit and may not accommodate the needs of residents making regular, scheduled trips to school or work.

## 4.0

## Peer Review

The following peer review compares key performance indicators to establish a reasonable expectation of what municipalities similar to Centre Wellington experience in their networks and the level of service they generally provide. To ensure any transit system improvements recommended for Centre Wellington are growth-ready, jurisdictions with populations trending towards the 2051 population of Centre Wellington were used. The summary of peer system data is presented in **Table 7**, and a summary of peer system financial metrics are presented in **Table 8**.

## 4.1

### Service Model and Operation

The most used service model for the urban area of Centre Wellington is a conventional fixed-route service. Many peer systems operate as 'pulse' networks, meaning that most or all routes depart from a central transfer point at regular intervals (typically every 30 to 60 minutes). This model is common in smaller fixed-route networks with compact urban layouts to minimize the impact of transfers, when there are few common transfer locations and less frequent fixed-route service.

Providing all day on-demand service in these municipalities would result in a less efficient service as compared to fixed-route service and would require more vehicles to accommodate the demand. Brant Transit operates a fully on-demand system similar to RIDE WELL in Wellington County, due to the dispersed demand to locations across the County, which are more complex to serve efficiently with fixed-route service.

To appropriately align the service models with variable travel demand across time periods, St. Thomas, North Bay, and Stratford all utilize hybrid service delivery models, whereby on-demand service is provided using the fixed-route vehicles during periods of lower demand, like late evenings or Sundays.

Generally, peer transit systems operate service between 6:00 AM and the early evening. In the evening, observed service models vary between lower frequency fixed-routes and on-demand service. Saturday and Sunday service is provided by all peer agencies, though usually for fewer service hours and at either a reduced fixed-route frequency or by replacing service in that area with on-demand service.

**Table 7: Peer Municipality Service Metrics**

| <b>Metric</b>                      | <b>Stratford Transit</b> | <b>Brant Transit</b> | <b>North Bay Transit</b> | <b>Belleville Transit</b> | <b>Railway City Transit (St. Thomas)</b> | <b>Peer Group Average</b> |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Municipal population               | 33,000                   | 39,474               | 52,662                   | 55,071                    | 42,840                                   | <b>44,609</b>             |
| Service area (square kilometres)   | 28                       | 843.2                | 53                       | 247.2                     | 35.6                                     | <b>241.4</b>              |
| Service type                       | Mixed                    | On-demand            | Mixed                    | Fixed-route               | Mixed                                    | <b>Not applicable</b>     |
| Number of fixed routes             | 7                        | Not applicable       | 10                       | 12                        | 5                                        | <b>8.5</b>                |
| Total active vehicles              | 17                       | 10                   | 20                       | 19                        | 10                                       | <b>15.2</b>               |
| Peak vehicles                      | 10                       | Not applicable       | 11                       | 13                        | 4                                        | <b>9.5</b>                |
| Annual revenue vehicle hours       | 41,750                   | 20,518               | 41,470                   | 73,983                    | 19,989                                   | <b>34,742</b>             |
| Annual ridership (linked)          | 551,160                  | 23,980               | 1,082,893                | 1,599,523                 | 130,090                                  | <b>677,530</b>            |
| Ridership per capita               | 16.7                     | 0.6                  | 22.6                     | 29.0                      | 3.0                                      | <b>14.4</b>               |
| Boardings per revenue vehicle hour | 13.2                     | 1.2                  | 26.1                     | 21.6                      | 6.5                                      | <b>17.1</b>               |
| Revenue vehicle hours per capita   | 1.27                     | 0.52                 | 0.87                     | 1.34                      | 0.47                                     | <b>0.89</b>               |

**Table 8: Peer Municipality Financial Metrics**

| <b>Metric</b>                     | <b>Stratford Transit</b> | <b>Brant Transit</b> | <b>North Bay Transit</b> | <b>Belleville Transit</b> | <b>Railway City Transit (St. Thomas)</b> | <b>Peer Group Average</b> |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Average fare                      | \$1.46                   | \$4.10               | \$2.51                   | \$1.16                    | \$2.15                                   | <b>\$2.28</b>             |
| Annual total operating costs      | \$3,241,289              | \$896,089            | \$6,132,153              | \$6,672,918               | \$1,613,129                              | <b>\$3,711,116</b>        |
| Annual total operating revenue    | \$806,647                | \$98,369             | \$2,756,383              | \$2,006,323               | \$280,315                                | <b>\$1,189,527</b>        |
| Municipal contribution per capita | \$72.89                  | \$20.21              | \$59.76                  | \$79.86                   | \$10.48                                  | <b>\$48.64</b>            |
| Cost per revenue vehicle hour     | \$77.64                  | \$33.07              | \$145.64                 | \$88.78                   | \$68.21                                  | <b>\$82.67</b>            |
| Revenue/cost ratio                | 25%                      | 11%                  | 45%                      | 30%                       | 21%                                      | <b>32%</b>                |

## 4.2 Service Productivity

North Bay and Belleville both have a high service productivity, expressed in boardings per revenue vehicle hour. However, both services are within dense urban areas, and have large amounts of post-secondary riders. When compared to Centre Wellington, lower boardings per revenue vehicle hour should be anticipated, largely given the Township's smaller urban population and areas of lower-density housing. St. Thomas sees 6.5 trips per revenue vehicle hour, which is a more realistic expectation for productivity in the urban areas of Centre Wellington because of the similar operating environment between the two municipalities. It is anticipated the majority of service would be concentrated within Elora, Fergus, and Salem, an urban area smaller in size and population than St. Thomas.

Additionally, the ridership per capita metric provides a generalized impression of how the rate of use is based on population size. While the peer group average is approximately 14 rides per capita, the actual numbers vary quite significantly between agencies. St. Thomas sees a significantly lower figure at just 3 rides per capita, but this is also reflective of the fact that they provide one of the lowest amounts of service per capita. It is likely, that to start, Centre Wellington would see lower overall ridership per capita more similar to St. Thomas. As the service grows and becomes the regular mode of travel for more residents, overall utilization of the service would improve.

## 4.3 Financial Performance

The above peer agencies have varied financial performance, with some systems providing over one million rides per year, whereas others have far more modest ridership.

The average fare observed across all jurisdictions is \$2.28. This is an average fare that considers discounts provided to seniors, students, and other users. This suggests an adult cash fare of approximately \$3.00 would be appropriate for a local transit service, allowing for affordable transportation for shorter-distance trips.

Generally, there is a correlation between municipal contribution, service hours, and the revenue received from fares to offset costs of providing the service. The peer average for cost recovery is 32%, though it is crucial to acknowledge that established transit

services that focus on urban areas can streamline operations in ways that are not as feasible to smaller, rural or start-up, public transit operations.

It is likely that local services would see a slightly higher cost recovery ratio than any regional services provided to surrounding municipalities, largely due to greater passenger turnover over shorter distances and less overall travel time. Brant Transit's cost recovery ratio of 11% is a reasonable benchmark for regional services, as many of their trips are travelling from the population centres of Brant County into the City of Brantford. For local service within the urban areas of Centre Wellington, St. Thomas and Stratford's cost recovery ratio of between 20-25% is a reasonable expectation.

## 5.0

## Ridership Forecast

Ridership forecasts of the Township's potential transit service are essential for effective service planning, allowing the system to be tailored to meet future demand. This forecast has been prepared to best use available statistical data sources and is also informed by the results of Round 1 public engagement (see **Section 8.0**). This forecast includes near-term, 5-year, 10-year, and 2051 horizon years, and will be used to inform the preferred service options.

The ridership forecast has been informed by the performance of peer agencies, existing travel demand and ridership data, and engagement results. Quantitative data available through the Transportation Tomorrow Study, peer municipalities, and existing transit services in Centre Wellington were prioritized to contextualize the service within the greater transportation network in the Township and County.

## 5.1

### Urban Travel Demand

The urban travel demand of the Township has been forecasted using peer agency key performance indicators. Below, **Table 9** and **Table 10** summarizes the key ridership benchmarks of the peer transit agencies selected for this study. These agencies have been grouped into two population segments, representing both the near-term and long-term population growth of Centre Wellington. It should be noted that Brant County was excluded from this as it is more reflective of the RIDE WELL service and not an urban transit system.

**Table 9: Key Ridership Benchmarks of Smaller Peer Agencies**

| Municipality                | Population    | Total Annual Ridership | Total Annual Service Hours | Service Hours per Capita | Ridership per Capita | Ridership per Service Hour |
|-----------------------------|---------------|------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Stratford                   | 33,000        | 551,160                | 41,750                     | 1.3                      | 16.7                 | 13.2                       |
| St. Thomas                  | 42,840        | 130,090                | 19,989                     | 0.5                      | 3.0                  | 6.5                        |
| <b>Small System Average</b> | <b>37,920</b> | <b>340,625</b>         | <b>30,870</b>              | <b>0.9</b>               | <b>9.9</b>           | <b>9.9</b>                 |

**Table 10: Key Ridership Benchmarks of Larger Peer Agencies**

| <b>Municipality</b>         | <b>Population</b> | <b>Total Annual Ridership</b> | <b>Total Annual Service Hours</b> | <b>Service Hours per Capita</b> | <b>Ridership per Capita</b> | <b>Ridership per Service Hour</b> |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| North Bay                   | 52,662            | 1,082,893                     | 41,470                            | 0.87                            | 22.6                        | 26.1                              |
| Belleville                  | 55,071            | 1,599,523                     | 73,983                            | 1.34                            | 29.0                        | 21.6                              |
| <b>Large System Average</b> | <b>53,867</b>     | <b>1,341,208</b>              | <b>57,727</b>                     | <b>1.11</b>                     | <b>25.8</b>                 | <b>23.9</b>                       |

There is a correlation between service levels (service hours per capita) and ridership (ridership per capita). Generally, the more service that is provided, the more transit service will be used as it will attract more overall riders.

The performance averages from these systems were used to forecast potential ridership scenarios relative to Centre Wellington's projected population growth. Fergus, Elora, and Salem share a higher volume of internal trips, and the highest overall travel demand in the Township is within Fergus. This aligns with Fergus having the larger population, many services, and the most commercial amenities for residents.

Using the peer service level and utilization benchmarks, transit demand has been estimated for the urban areas of the Township, summarized in **Table 11**. This forecast would represent an approximate weekday mode share of 2% relative to the total urban travel demand, in line with peer municipalities. This is based on similar levels of service being in place as noted in the peer averages in **Table 7** and **Table 8** and assumes the ridership attraction is most similar to the smaller peer systems. For the purposes of this estimate, a graduated boardings per capita rate was used, growing as the system matures over time and the municipal population grows.

It should be noted that ridership forecasts will take time to achieve. This is due to the time required to effectively market a new service and for residents to change their long-established travel behaviours. Typically, full maturity of ridership is achieved within two to three years of implementation. To be conservative, a ridership per capita during the first year of service was reduced to approximately 7.0 boardings per capita, with the understanding that this would increase as the system grows and travel patterns change.

Should these service levels increase as population grows, the ridership forecast could mirror the larger peer systems, who average 25.8 boardings per capita. A more conservative figure of 16 boarding per capita was used for the urban service as Centre Wellington does not have as many concentrated destinations as the peer systems, and many of the major destinations that Centre Wellington residents travel to are in Guelph, which would see higher ridership on the regional service.

For the 2036 period, the boardings per capita rate was increased at the same rate as population growth to represent the interim 10-year horizon.

**Table 11: Estimated Urban Transit Trips**

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Estimated Population<br/>(Urban)</b> | <b>Annual Transit Trips<br/>(Urban)</b> | <b>Boardings per Capita</b> |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2026        | 30,800                                  | 215,700                                 | 7.0                         |
| 2031        | 38,700                                  | 367,900                                 | 9.5                         |
| 2036        | 42,600                                  | 568,200                                 | 11                          |
| 2051        | 50,400                                  | 806,400                                 | 16                          |

These figures assume consistent levels of service relative to the population and employment projections through to 2051. This could be adjusted based on the service option evaluation, and the overall uptick in ridership from the start of service. Increased service levels would improve transit mode share, therefore increasing ridership.

## 5.2 Rural Travel Demand

The travel needs of rural residents differ from urban residents in that there are fewer regular aggregated trips made between different points. Rural travel demand tends to follow more discretionary or irregular trips, rather than daily commutes, though it is still crucial that transit coverage is provided.

Trips within rural Centre Wellington are currently provided by RIDE WELL, connecting passengers across the County and to urban areas. Typically, on-demand transit is a good service for maintaining essential transit coverage in rural areas as it can easily adapt to changes in demand and allows every rural resident to have transit service. Within Belwood, Inverhaugh, and other settlements in the rural areas of the Township, the anticipated demand would be sufficiently accommodated by the on-demand transit service.

The rural areas of Centre Wellington (outside of Fergus, Elora, and Salem) are growing at a slower rate than the urban areas of the Township, and the population is not anticipated to grow significantly through 2051. Furthermore, a small portion of RIDE WELL trips are currently being made in the rural areas.

**Table 12** below illustrates the potential growth in demand for rural RIDE WELL trips. This is based on existing annual trips in completed in 2024 within the rural service area of Centre Wellington as illustrated in **Table 5** above. Given the limited growth in population, no change to the boardings per capita from today was assumed.

Given these projections, public transit trips within the rural areas of Centre Wellington remain best accommodated by on-demand service.

**Table 12: Estimated Annual Rural Transit Ridership**

| Year | Estimated Population<br>(Rural) | Annual Transit Trips<br>(Rural) | Boardings per Capita<br>(Rural) |
|------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2026 | 7,300                           | 1,400                           | 0.2                             |
| 2031 | 7,400                           | 1,400                           | 0.2                             |
| 2036 | 7,500                           | 1,400                           | 0.2                             |
| 2051 | 7,800                           | 1,500                           | 0.2                             |

As Fergus, Elora, and Salem grow, the urban transit service will be able to expand and scale as needed to maintain urban transit coverage, enabling the on-demand service to focus more on the needs of rural residents and those at the boundaries of the urban area. On-demand transit remains the preferred option for rural Centre Wellington as it provides the most flexible service option, both operationally and for transit users.

### 5.3

## Regional Travel Demand

Travel to the three primary municipalities outside of Centre Wellington (Guelph, the Region of Waterloo, and Orangeville) were calculated applying mode share data which mimics urban demand (available in TTS survey data). A 2% mode share for regional demand was applied, which may be conservative for Guelph as it is in closer proximity to Centre Wellington and connects to a transit hub with a robust transit network.

**Table 13** summarizes the estimated opportunity of total weekday transit trips to surrounding municipalities.

**Table 13: Daily Regional Transit Trip Demand (Weekday) Using 2% Mode Share**

| <b>Destination</b>            | <b>Average<br/>Weekday<br/>Transit Trips<br/>2026</b> | <b>Average<br/>Weekday<br/>Transit Trips<br/>2031</b> | <b>Average<br/>Weekday<br/>Transit Trips<br/>2036</b> | <b>Average<br/>Weekday<br/>Transit Trips<br/>2051</b> |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Guelph</b>                 | 108                                                   | 139                                                   | 155                                                   | 202                                                   |
| <b>Region of<br/>Waterloo</b> | 42                                                    | 54                                                    | 60                                                    | 75                                                    |
| <b>Orangeville</b>            | 7                                                     | 9                                                     | 10                                                    | 14                                                    |

For weekend trips, it was assumed that the weekday ridership would be 75% of weekday ridership. This is lower than weekdays as there are fewer work and school trips, however, demand is adjusted to reflect the high number of visitor trips to Centre Wellington over weekends, holidays, and Fridays during the summer period and over the Christmas holiday season. Therefore, it is possible that weekend regional travel demand could be closer to weekday trips during these periods than in other municipalities, depending on factors like time of year, the ability to connect to the GO Transit network, and the overall quality of service provided. It was also identified through engagement that residents make discretionary trips to Guelph on weekends, which may further support some regional service to Guelph.

Based on the forecasted ridership to Guelph, it is anticipated that an expanded fixed-route service, building on the GOST route, would best capture ridership and would also encourage regular commuter travel. This includes residents making regular trips to Guelph for work and school, as was possible with the former private commuter bus service. Collaboration with surrounding municipalities and Wellington County may help support this service, including streamlining RIDE WELL connections to a stop in Fergus for those who are travelling to Guelph.

For service to other municipalities, like the Region of Waterloo, it is expected that a defined on-demand service connection point on the existing RIDE WELL service (e.g., in Breslau or Elmira) would meet forecasted demand in the short-to-mid-term. As the Township continues to grow in the future, it is possible for this demand to evolve and for the service model to adjust as demand dictates.

For travel to Orangeville, the travel demand data did not show enough demand to warrant a fixed-route service or extension of the RIDE WELL service.

To understand the potential annual regional demand to Guelph, the daily ridership estimates using the 2% mode share target was adjusted to reflect the growth in the boardings per capita that is anticipated for the urban service. This is illustrated in **Table 14** below over the horizon period. Note that these projections account for all potential transit trips between Centre Wellington and Guelph, including those on any future GOST or RIDE WELL services.

**Table 14: Estimated Annual Regional Transit Trips to Guelph**

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Estimated Population<br/>(Urban)</b> | <b>Annual Transit Trips<br/>(Regional)</b> | <b>Boardings per Capita<br/>(Regional)</b> |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 2026        | 30,900                                  | 31,300                                     | 1.0                                        |
| 2031        | 38,700                                  | 53,200                                     | 1.4                                        |
| 2036        | 42,600                                  | 80,100                                     | 1.9                                        |
| 2051        | 50,400                                  | 167,700                                    | 3.3                                        |

## 6.0

## Engagement

## 6.1

### Engagement Activities

Through this study, extensive community engagement has been undertaken to understand the mobility needs of Centre Wellington residents from diverse backgrounds and life circumstances. This includes members of vulnerable demographics, community members with disabilities, young people, shift workers, low-income residents, and seniors. Engagement has also included key stakeholders, including key employers and business improvement areas, nearby municipalities such as Guelph and Wellington County, local public health units, and other interested parties. **Table 15** summarizes the engagement activities undertaken during Round 1 and Round 2 of the study. A sample of engagement materials and specific outcomes is included in **Appendix A**.

**Table 15: Summary of Community Engagement Activities**

| Category                | Activity        | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Round 1 and 2 Publicity | Social Media    | Promotional posts on various platforms shared study commencement, survey links, and notices for public information centres.                                                                                            |
| Round 1 and 2 Publicity | News article    | EloraFergusToday and CBC News published articles which built project awareness and informed the public about engagement surveys.                                                                                       |
| Round 1 and 2 Publicity | Project Webpage | A dedicated page was published on the Township's engagement website ( <a href="https://connectcw.ca/transitstudy">connectcw.ca/transitstudy</a> ) providing project updates, background information, and survey links. |
| Round 1 and 2 Publicity | Postcards       | Distributed at key community locations, such as libraries, to publicize the study and provide QR codes for the online survey.                                                                                          |
| Round 1 and 2 Publicity | Posters         | Displayed posters in different areas throughout the Township to encourage participation and share project details.                                                                                                     |

| Category                                   | Activity                   | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Round 1 Stakeholder Feedback               | High School Session        | An event at Centre Wellington District High School (CWDHS) on October 21, 2025, involving a presentation to Grade 11 and 12 students followed by an activity for students to draw routes to their usual destinations in the area using maps.                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Round 1 Stakeholder Feedback               | Advisory Committees        | Presentations were delivered to the Healthy Communities Advisory Committee (HCAC, November 5) and the Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee (September 4) to gather specialized feedback.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Round 1 Stakeholder Feedback               | Council Members Engagement | Individual sessions with Council members to identify target passengers and prioritize transit goals.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Round 1 Stakeholder Feedback               | Indigenous Engagement      | Formal engagement letters were sent to the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Six Nations of the Grand River, and Métis Nation of Ontario to introduce the project, invite participation and offer introductory meetings to discuss preferred engagement approaches.                                                                                                                                                               |
| Round 1 and 2 Technical Advisory Committee | Workshops                  | <p>Two meetings were held with a Technical Advisory Committee to discuss service integration, operational considerations, and connectivity. The committee included members from Guelph Transit, Grand River Transit, the City of Owen Sound, the County of Wellington, and the Township of Centre Wellington.</p> <p>The first meeting was held during Round 1 on November 5, 2025. The second meeting occurred on January 28, 2026.</p> |

| Category                                             | Activity                     | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Round 1 and 2 Healthy Communities Advisory Committee | Presentations                | <p>During Round 1, presented to the HCAC on integrating public transit with other active transportation initiatives, planning, and sustainability. The presentation discussed public transit opportunities and consulted the committee on priorities. This meeting occurred November 5, 2025.</p> <p>Round 2 HCAC presentation will outline the recommended service plan and other findings. This meeting will occur in Spring 2026.</p> |
| Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee               | Presentation                 | Round 1 Accessibility Advisory Committee occurred September 4 <sup>th</sup> , 2025, and outlined the study goals and engaged participants on accessibility-related considerations which should be given over the course of the study.                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Public Feedback                                      | Round 1 Open Houses          | An in-person public open house was held on October 21, 2025, from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM, at the Centre Wellington Sportsplex, and the transit display was attended by approximately 40 people.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Public Feedback                                      | Round 1 Virtual PIC          | An online Virtual Public Information Centre was hosted on the connectcw.ca project page in October 2025 to introduce the project, transit context and options, and to collect data on local and regional destinations. This Virtual PIC accompanied the online survey.                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Public Feedback                                      | Round 1 and 2 Public Surveys | <p>Round 1 public survey was launched on October 8, 2025, to assess community opinions, vision, values, and existing travel patterns.</p> <p>The Round 2 public survey focused on ensuring the proposed five-route transit network met community needs, including feedback on specific routes, frequency, and fare pricing for local and regional trips. This survey occurred from January 30 and February 22, 2026.</p>                 |

## 6.2

## Round 1 Key Engagement Themes, What We Heard

This section summarizes the feedback that was heard from the public throughout Round 1 through the engagement activities listed above. This fed into the development of service options in **Section 7.0**.

## 6.2.1

### Regional Connection and Key Destinations

- Connecting Elora and Fergus was a priority to many participants from different engagement activities.
- Through focus groups, two key corridors were identified: connecting Elora and Fergus via Colborne Street and St. Andrew Street; north-south in Fergus along Highway 6.
- Council members observed that a high number of residents appear to be using the Downtown Shuttle, including for commuting between Elora and Fergus for work, suggesting a latent daily transit need beyond tourism.
- Guelph is the dominant regional destination as identified during the open house and the community survey (73% of community survey respondents would use transit to Guelph monthly or more). The Region of Waterloo is secondary (58% of survey respondents identified monthly or more) for destinations like Conestoga Mall.
- Top Guelph trip purposes from the community survey: shopping/errands (72%), GO Transit connections (67%), social visits (61%), and medical appointments (52%). Key destinations: Guelph Central Station, SmartCentres, University of Guelph.

Top survey destinations in Fergus from the community survey: Walmart/FreshCo area (74%), Zehrs/Giant Tiger area (63%), Downtown Marketplace (62%), Sportsplex/CWDHS (48%). In Elora: MacDonald Square/Downtown (60%).

## 6.2.2

### Transit Service Gaps

- The top three important aspects of transit for community survey respondents were: affordable fees (56%), extended hours (44%), and reliability (40%).
- High school students suggested free/discounted fares with school ID.
- There was poor satisfaction with the limited hours of operation of the current Elora and Fergus Downtown Shuttle.
- 13% of survey respondents lack vehicle access; 8% have mobility challenges.

- RIDE WELL: Limited hours (no evenings/weekends), difficulty booking, wait times.
- GOST: Only two trips daily per direction, poorly advertised.
- Only one taxi company remains in the community.

## 7.0

## Identified Service Options

The following service options were identified for the Township. All service options are recommended in concert with both regional and specialized transit service, which are discussed in **Section 7.4**.

## 7.1

### Option 1: On-Demand with Fixed-Route Elora – Fergus Link

On-demand transit, likely through the expansion of RIDE WELL service, could be a viable option for further expand service. Currently, RIDE WELL's resources are stretched to accommodate the demand in Centre Wellington, and barriers to the service exist including hours of operation, reliability, and the need to pre-book trips.

This option would see the Elora and Fergus Downtown fixed-route shuttle adjusted to operate on weekdays all year and/or with longer hours of operation. The fixed link would also potentially be adjusted to serve more stops and have greater utility for local trips.

This service option would see an expansion of the on-demand service within the urban and rural areas of the Township that would allow passengers to travel within Fergus and within Elora-Salem and connect to the fixed-route service if travelling between the two communities. As identified in the ridership forecast, it is anticipated that on-demand would be the most suitable option for rural areas of the Township under all scenarios.

The exact structure of the on-demand service would be determined through detailed service planning to establish the resources required for the service, but would likely require separating the Township into multiple on-demand service zones to maintain service. Regional fixed-route service to Guelph would also be provided.

On-demand service would maximize coverage within the urban areas of the municipalities and service would be complemented by the fixed link. On-demand service has fewer barriers to implementation due to the existing RIDE WELL system, though ridership may overwhelm the service leading to trips not being available when passengers need to travel, depending on available resources.

## 7.2 Option 2: Fixed-Route Network

Fixed-route transit service, which means vehicles travelling along routes at regular intervals, is the traditional model of public transit service. GOST and the Elora and Fergus Downtown Shuttle are both examples of fixed-route transit that currently serve Centre Wellington. Depending on the projected boardings per hour, fixed-route transit can be more efficient than on-demand transit or other service models, as there is less 'deadhead' time (where the vehicle is not generating revenue). Furthermore, for corridors with a high concentration of residential and employment areas, along with aggregated travel demand patterns, fixed-route service would allow for the most trips to be accommodated in the most efficient method. Fixed-route service is also able to capture a wider array of trips, with passengers able to plan their travel around regular schedules.

Fixed-route service requires larger investments in both capital and operational costs. This includes stop infrastructure, and depending on the details of the service model, potentially more vehicles or more hours of operation.

Fixed-route transit service was the most common service model observed in peer agencies and is a proven service model for moderately sized yet compact urban areas like Elora, Fergus, and Salem. The Downtown Shuttle service has also demonstrated that fixed-route service could be an appropriate model for travelling distances less feasible with walking.

With this service option, the urban area would be served by fixed-routes, on-demand service would continue to be used in the rural areas of the Township, and the regional fixed route to Guelph would also operate.

## 7.3 Option 3: Hybrid or Mixed Service Models

To best align transit service with variable periods of travel demand, it is possible to combine aspects of service options. The network can phase and scale on-demand coverage or fixed-routes over time as demand warrants. This can help ensure overall cost-efficient service levels, using the model best geared to observed ridership levels.

This service model could see the urban area of the Township use different service models to best maximize coverage and available service hours. For example, corridors

with high ridership potential may warrant fixed-route coverage at all times of day, but smaller residential areas may only warrant on-demand connections to a fixed-route or service hub during off-peak periods (e.g. late evenings or weekends). This would be done if there is minimal demand for trips and the switch to an on-demand service would reduce vehicle requirements while still maintaining the same level of coverage (proximity to a transit stop).

Rural areas of the Township would continue to have on-demand service which they can use to connect to the urban area and to other parts of the County. Regional fixed-route service would also continue to be provided, connecting with the urban and rural transit service.

## 7.4 Further Service Components

### 7.4.1 Regional Transit Service

Providing regional transit connections to neighbouring municipalities is an important goal of this study. Through the forecasting of regional travel demand, it was determined that the most effective preliminary service model would be an expansion of fixed-route service between the urban area of Centre Wellington and Guelph.

The integration of regional connections with the local urban transit service will be important in encouraging usage of the regional transit service, as well as maintaining a strong ridership base which uses the service for both connections to surrounding municipalities and onward travel to other communities like Toronto. As demonstrated in the demand forecasting in **Section 5.2**, regional transit connections have strong demand from the urban areas of Elora, Fergus, and Salem.

For post-secondary students in Guelph or Waterloo who live in Centre Wellington, dependable and convenient regional transit would be an option for students. Commuters to Guelph from Centre Wellington, including those making onward connections on the GO Transit network, would require dependable and reliable commute-timed trips for the service to best meet their needs.

Demand to the Region of Waterloo was also identified, but at a lower magnitude than demand to Guelph. Under all options, it is recommended to first work with the County to expand RIDE WELL service to stop in Elmira and/or Breslau in the Region of Waterloo,

for further connections to the Grand River Transit (GRT) network in Waterloo Region. It is also recommended to work with the County to enhance fixed-route service on the Highway 6 corridor between Fergus and Guelph.

#### 7.4.2 Specialized Transit

Specialized transit is necessary to ensure that any local transit services provided are compliant with all relevant accessibility legislation and regulations. Specialized transit is typically provided in parallel to conventional transit to meet the needs for passengers with mobility needs. Presently, accessible trips are being provided in Centre Wellington by both the accessible van of RIDE WELL, and by the Wellington Resource Centre Transportation.

Irrespective of the recommended service model, local specialized transit will be required to fulfil *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) requirements. It is possible for this service to be delivered in partnership with other agencies or organizations, including through existing providers or the County of Wellington.

## 8.0

## Transit Alternative Evaluation

## 8.1

### Evaluation Criteria

An evaluation framework was developed to select a preferred transit service model for Centre Wellington. This was conducted for the three transit service options are summarized below in **Table 16**. Each option considered a solution for urban, rural, and regional transit demand. Based on existing transportation options, it was determined that on-demand was the most feasible option for rural service, and a fixed-route service was the most suitable option to connect to Guelph as the highest demand for regional travel. Therefore, the primary difference among the service options is for the urban transit network within Elora, Fergus, and Salem.

**Table 16: Summary of Transit Options**

| Service Option | Urban Transit                             | Rural Transit | Regional Transit                                       |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Option 1       | On-demand with fixed Elora – Fergus route | On-demand     | Fixed-route to Guelph, on-demand to Region of Waterloo |
| Option 2       | Fixed-route network                       | On-demand     | Fixed-route to Guelph, on-demand to Region of Waterloo |
| Option 3       | Mix of fixed-route and on-demand services | On-demand     | Fixed-route to Guelph, on-demand to Region of Waterloo |

An evaluation of the three urban transit alternatives was conducted using the evaluation criteria detailed in **Table 17**. This evaluation includes:

1. The ability to meet the needs of residents
2. Capture the demand for transit
3. Complement or integrate with existing services

The criteria were based on the most important considerations determined through analysis and engagement.

**Table 17: Service Alternative Evaluation Criteria**

| Criterion               | Description                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ridership Potential     | Ability to increase ridership over existing transit options in the Township                                    |
| Reliability             | Ability to be used for regular trips and be perceived as reliable                                              |
| Parking Mitigation      | Potential to meet visitor transportation needs and utilize intended municipal parking hubs                     |
| Multi-Modal Integration | Connectivity with other modes of travel, including walking and cycling, and between different transit services |
| Capital Costs           | Overall anticipated capital costs                                                                              |
| Operating Costs         | Overall anticipated operational costs                                                                          |
| Ease of Implementation  | Ability to implement the service in the short-term                                                             |

**Table 18** outlines the evaluation conducted for each of the service model options, and the specific evaluation rationale associated with each service option.

A “High”, “Medium” and “Low” assessment is provided, with “High” identifying the option that is most aligned with the criteria and “Low” indicating the option that is least aligned with the criteria.

**Table 18: Urban Transit Alternative Evaluation**

| Criteria                | Option 1 | Option 2 | Option 3 |
|-------------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Ridership Potential     | Low      | Medium   | High     |
| Reliability             | Low      | High     | Medium   |
| Parking Mitigation      | Medium   | High     | High     |
| Multi-modal Integration | High     | High     | High     |
| Capital Costs           | High     | Low      | Medium   |
| Operating Costs         | Low      | Medium   | Medium   |
| Ease of Implementation  | High     | Medium   | Medium   |

**8.1.1****Ridership Potential**

- Option 1 would be inefficient in capturing the projected ridership outside of the fixed-link corridor.
- Given the compact urban area of Fergus, Elora, and Salem, fixed-routes provide the most frequent and regular service, given constrained resources.

- Option 3 provides the most balanced potential for ridership, by providing fixed-route service at times of higher demand in more areas than Option 2 would be able to.

### 8.1.2 Reliability

- Public engagement feedback indicated a preference for the trip time predictability that fixed-routes provide.
- Option 2, as a complete fixed-route option, provides the highest degree of reliability, whereas Option 3 is moderately less because of the higher reliance on on-demand service.
- Many gaps and challenges have been noted around the current Ride Well on-demand service, and Option 1 would not effectively resolve these concerns.

### 8.1.3 Parking Mitigation

- Option 1 would be the least effective in diverting auto-trips to public transit, as it would capture the fewest potential passengers.
- Options 2 and 3 provide superior connectivity to potential regional links. Regional demand is a significant driver of the parking challenges being experienced in Elora and Fergus.

### 8.1.4 Multi-modal Integration

- Integration with other modes of transportation, including other transit services, active transportation, and park and rides, is possible through each of the service options.
- Integration would occur through different methods. With fixed-route vehicles, bicycle racks and trail connections can be provided.

### 8.1.5 Capital Costs

- The primary cost drivers of service start-up are vehicles, technology, fleet storage, and the construction of accessible and connected bus stops.
- Option 1, as a mostly on-demand service, would require the least physical infrastructure, resulting in fewer capital costs.
- Option 2 would require the most on-street infrastructure, resulting in higher capital costs.

- Option 3, as a mixed option, can allow more gradual capital investments in assets and infrastructure.

#### 8.1.6 Operating Costs

- Evaluation of operating costs associated with each service options largely falls to how well each option would grow ridership, in turn improving the cost recovery of the service.
- Cost recovery would be poorest with on-demand, as the overall capacity and projected usage of this option is low.
- The service utilization is anticipated to be highest with the fixed-routes.

#### 8.1.7 Ease of Implementation

- Option 1, as an expansion of the current Elora and Fergus downtown shuttle and Ride Well service, has the fewest barriers to implementation.
- Option 2 and 3 have more barriers to implementation, including the construction of infrastructure, new or modified contracts, and higher up-front costs.

#### 8.1.8 Summary

Through the evaluation of transit alternatives, it was found that Option 3, implementing a mix of fixed-route and on-demand services in the urban area, would most effectively capture transit ridership demand while providing the most reliable and dependable service levels. This option remains scalable through a phased implementation period, adding routes, vehicles, and improving headways as ridership warrants over time. Opportunities also exist for efficiencies between the vehicles used for both urban and rural on-demand. Guaranteed and timed connections are also possible to a fixed-route to Guelph, providing last-mile connectivity from the regional route to riders' final destinations. Option 3 also builds on the successes of the Elora and Fergus Downtown Shuttle, which has seen significant ridership growth despite limited hours of operation, limited service only during peak tourism season, and limited connectivity to several key commercial areas and residential neighbourhoods.

## 9.0

## Recommended Service Model

The Option 3 route structure is recommended as the preferred service model and used as the basis to create a recommended transit network. This would service the urban area with a mix of fixed-routes and on-demand services, rural areas with RIDE WELL, and regional travel to Guelph with a fixed-route service. The following section provides greater detail on the proposed transit network, including service frequencies and routings.

## 9.1

### Urban Fixed-Route Transit Recommendation

## 9.1.1

#### Network Design Principles

The urban fixed-route network was designed with the following principles:

- Maximum of one transfer required to get anywhere in the urban transit network, resulting in an identified need for a central transit terminal in Fergus.
- The routes shall take advantage of Elora, Fergus, and Salem's compact geography. Routes in Fergus shall be a maximum of ~10 kilometre round-trip (approximately 30 minutes), and routes to Elora and Salem shall be a maximum of ~20 kilometre round-trip (approximately 60 minutes).
- All routes will be designed to arrive into the Fergus transit terminal at the same time, allowing passengers to connect to other routes without a long wait-time. This will be hourly during the network launch period, moving to half-hourly in future implementation years.
- Service shall be provided nearby to key destinations in the community, wherever possible. Future development areas will be considered within route planning.
- The routes shall be simple, intuitive, and provide two-way service along major corridors, except where looping arrangements are appropriate for end-of-line conditions.
- Routes shall operate where safe pedestrian facilities exist, wherever possible. Routes shall be designed with respect to active transportation network connectivity.
- Any significant areas outside of walking distance (approximately 500 metres) from a fixed-route shall have on-demand service coverage.

## 9.1.2

**Network Route Structure**

The recommended service option for the urban area of Fergus, Elora and Salem is based around the gradual phasing-in of fixed-routes, using on-demand service to maintain coverage through the implementation period and in periods of low demand. As identified in **Section 4.0**, this service model is used by peer agencies, including St. Thomas, North Bay, and Stratford, scaling overall service levels to different periods of demand.

Through the evaluation of transit alternatives, it was found that a hybrid of both on-demand and fixed-route service would most effectively capture the demand for transit, and that it would most efficiently serve the urban areas of Elora, Fergus, and Salem.

The evolution of the proposed network is recommended to be split into three phases, which will evolve with both population growth and ridership growth. The phasing plan balances the need to be fiscally responsible, while introducing better levels of service as the system evolves.

**Figure 5** illustrates the Phase 1 and 2 networks, while **Figure 6** illustrates the Phase 3 network, with the details associated with each of the five routes outlined in **Sections 9.1.4 to 9.1.8**. This network is meant to be phased in over several years.

## 9.1.3

**Proposed Headways**

To provide a convenient transit network that encourages ridership growth, all fixed-routes have been designed as a pulse network centred at the proposed transit terminal in Downtown Fergus. In this system, all buses are timed to arrive and depart from the terminal simultaneously, creating a 'pulse' of departures. The schedules will follow a predictable 'clockface' schedule, meaning departures occur at the exact same time every hour. At launch, the pulse will occur every 60 minutes, with later phases improving route frequencies to every 30 minutes. The exception to this standard schedule is Route 1, which will be timed to alternate departures between the 'A' and 'B' branches serving north and south Elora, respectively.

During each pulse, vehicles will layover at the terminal for several minutes. This provides seamless connections for transferring passengers and time for operators to rest between runs.

Figure 5: Proposed Phase 1 Urban Transit Network

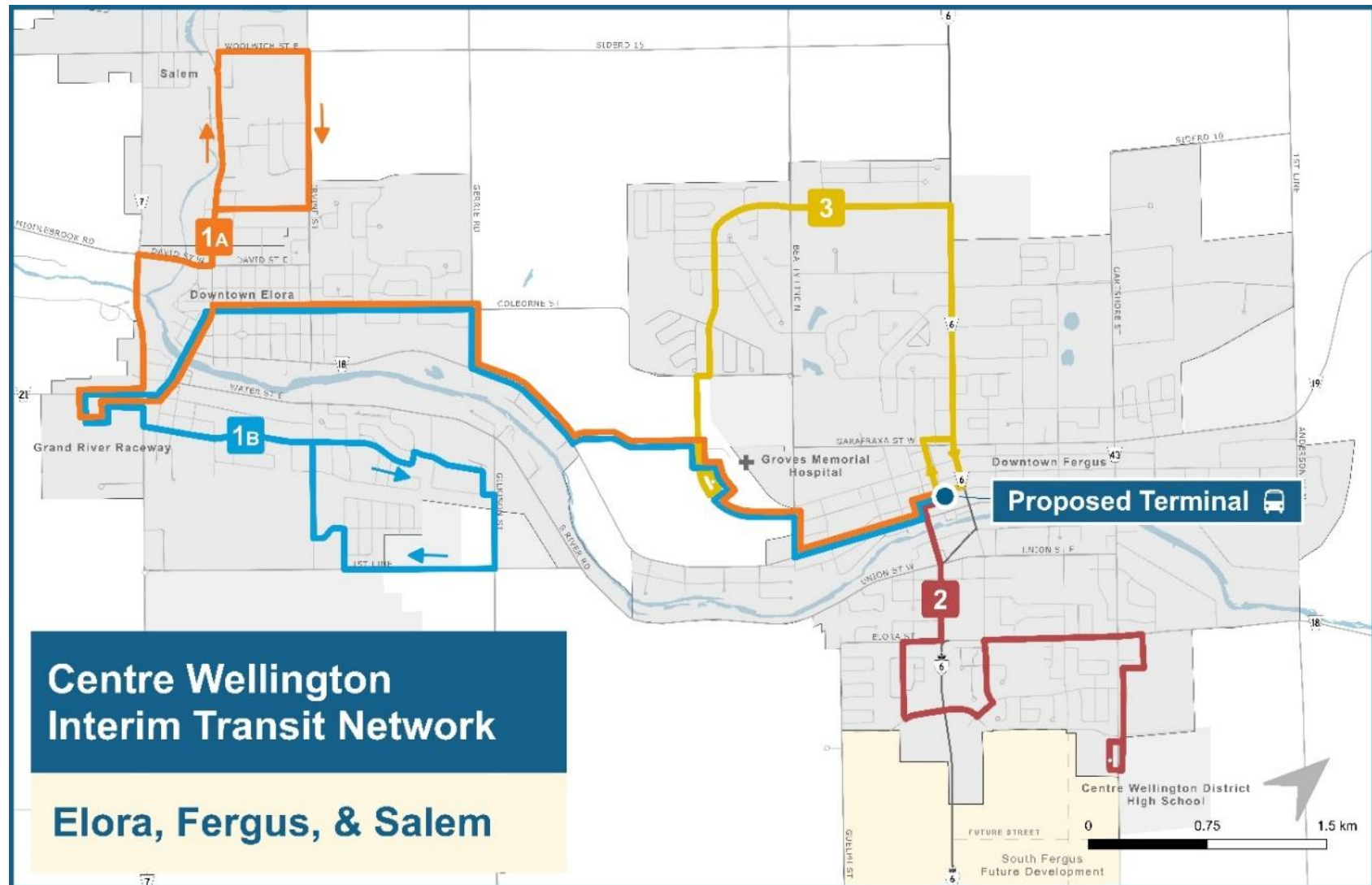
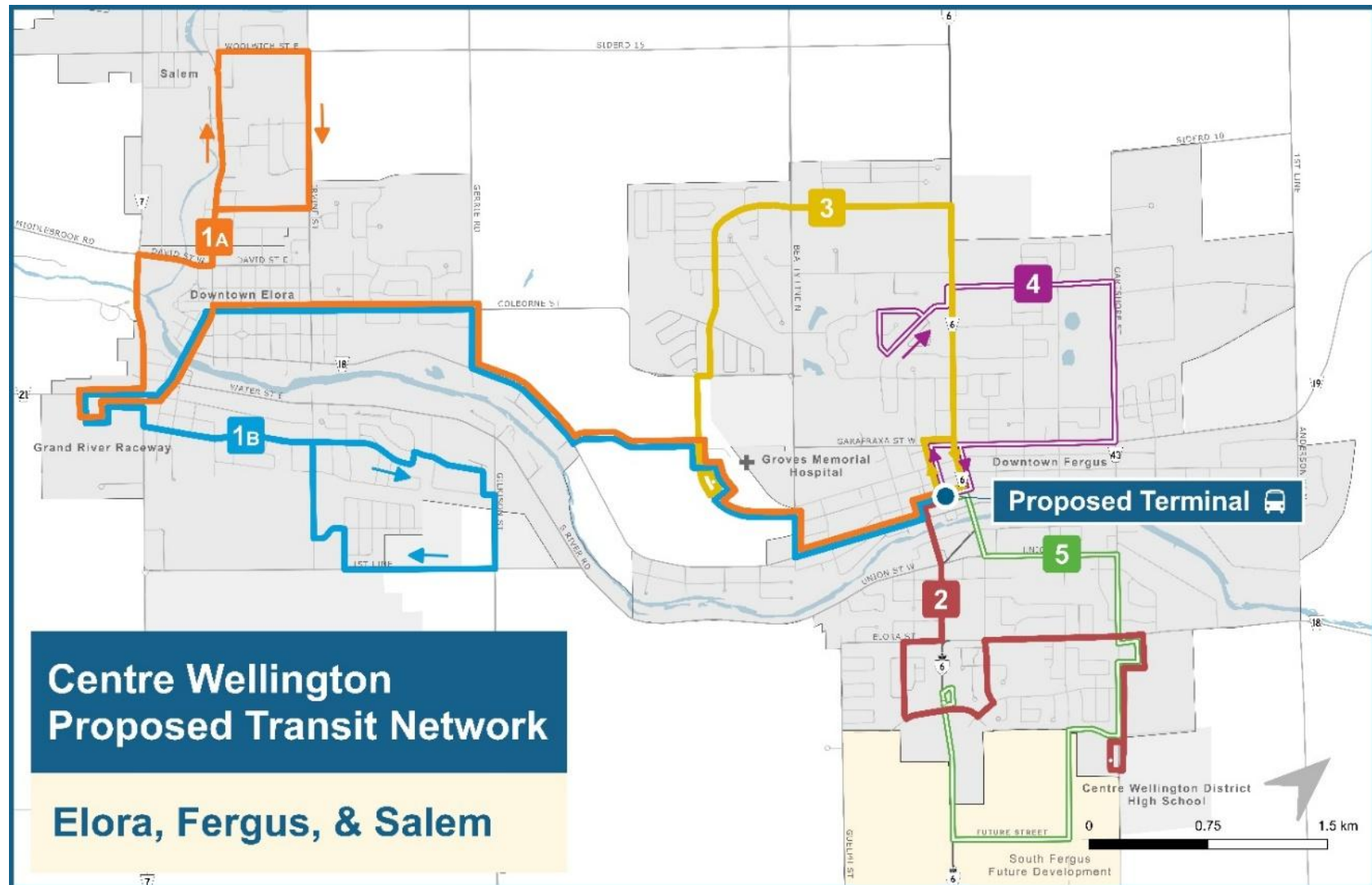


Figure 6: Proposed Phase 2 and 3 Urban Transit Network



The anticipated vehicle requirement for each phase of the fixed-route network is detailed in **Table 19**, along with route headways. By using clockface departures, frequencies can easily be improved beyond the first three phases of implementation, depending on service performance. Note that Route 1 is a branched service, resulting in combined frequencies of 30 minutes between Downtown Fergus and the Grand River Raceway.

**Table 19: Proposed Headway Implementation – Fixed-Routes**

| Route                 | Phase 1        | Phase 2        | Phase 3                 |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| <b>1A</b>             | 60 (1 bus)     | 60 (1 bus)     | 60 (1 bus)              |
| <b>1B</b>             | 60 (1 bus)     | 60 (1 bus)     | 60 (1 bus)              |
| <b>2</b>              | 60 (0.5 bus)   | 30 (1 bus)     | 30 (1 bus)              |
| <b>3</b>              | 60 (0.5 bus)   | 30 (1 bus)     | 30 (1 bus)              |
| <b>4</b>              | 0              | 60 (0.5 bus)   | 30 (1 bus) <sup>1</sup> |
| <b>5</b>              | 0              | 60 (0.5 bus)   | 30 (1 bus) <sup>1</sup> |
| <b>Buses Required</b> | <b>3 buses</b> | <b>5 buses</b> | <b>6 buses</b>          |

The hours of operation would also gradually improve over time, using the existing Elora and Fergus Downtown Shuttle as a baseline for weekend hours. The evolution of service hours in each of the phases is illustrated in **Table 20** below.

**Table 20: Proposed Hours of Operation – Urban Transit Fixed Routes**

| Hours    | Phase 1            | Phase 2            | Phase 3            |
|----------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Weekday  | 6:00 AM - 8:00 PM  | 6:00 AM - 9:00 PM  | 6:00 AM - 10:00 PM |
| Saturday | 10:00 AM - 6:00 PM | 10:00 AM - 6:00 PM | 8:00 AM - 10:00 PM |
| Sunday   | 10:00 AM - 6:00 PM | 10:00 AM - 6:00 PM | 9:00 AM - 8:00 PM  |

On-demand services would include both rural and urban coverage. The urban service area will vary depending on when Routes 4 and 5 are implemented and their hours of operation. The regional service to Guelph from the terminal in Downtown Fergus (see **Section 9.3**) would operate limited service, with an initial aim to connect commuters to Guelph, including the GO Train and the University of Guelph. Limited service would operate on weekends and would coordinate with the urban network hours of operation.

<sup>1</sup> Routes 4 and 5 would be replaced with on-demand service on Saturdays and Sundays.

Over time, this service could be improved to all-day, hourly service. One bus is required for hourly service between Fergus and Guelph Central Station.

It is anticipated that by integrating services, only one on-demand vehicle would be required for the urban and rural coverage area.

## 9.1.4

**Route 1A Elora to Salem and Route 1B Elora to Gilkison**

Together, Route 1A (**Figure 7**) and Route 1B (**Figure 8**) form the network in Elora and Salem, and the major connection between Elora and Fergus. This branched route has been designed to combine service along the highest demand corridor, between Downtown Fergus, the Groves Memorial Community Hospital, Wellington Terrace, the County Museum and Archives, Downtown Elora, and the Grand River Raceway. From the Raceway, the route branches to residential areas north and south of the Grand River. This arrangement maintains direct, point-to-point service between Elora and Fergus, supporting the mobility of both residents and tourists. By providing transfer-free connections to the residential neighbourhoods, it allows for convenient connections to be made from all trips between Elora and Downtown Fergus. For trips being made within Elora, most passengers would maintain a one-seat journey, with a maximum of one transfer required. Nearly all major destinations identified in Elora and Salem are served by this route.

From implementation, this route would be operated with two vehicles, providing a combined 30-minute frequency between the Grand River Raceway and Downtown Fergus, where the 1A and 1B branch overlap. Each branch is anticipated to take approximately 60 minutes to complete one round-trip, including a layover (operator break and schedule recovery time) at the proposed terminal in Fergus.

Figure 7: Proposed Route 1A Elora to Salem

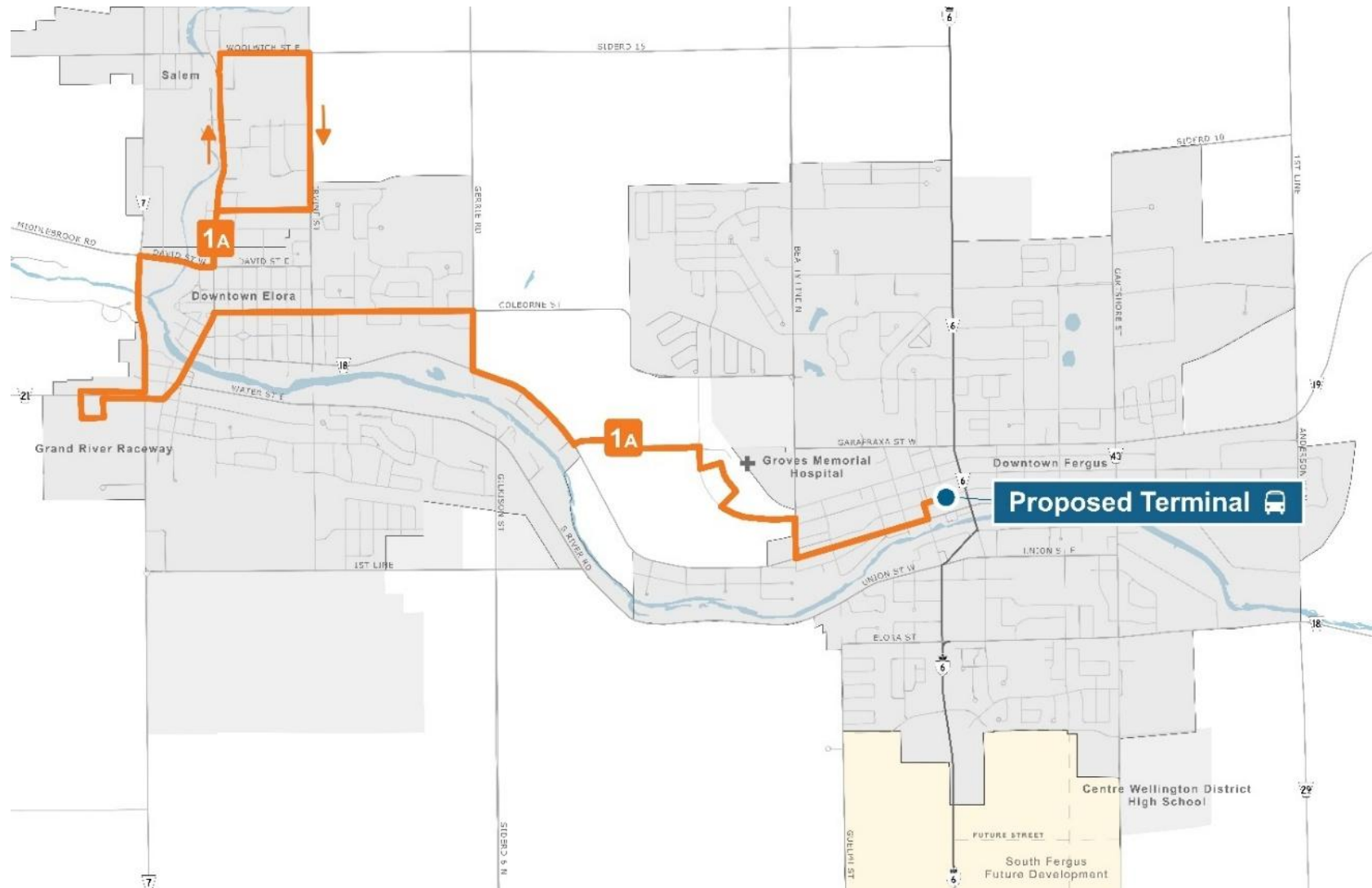
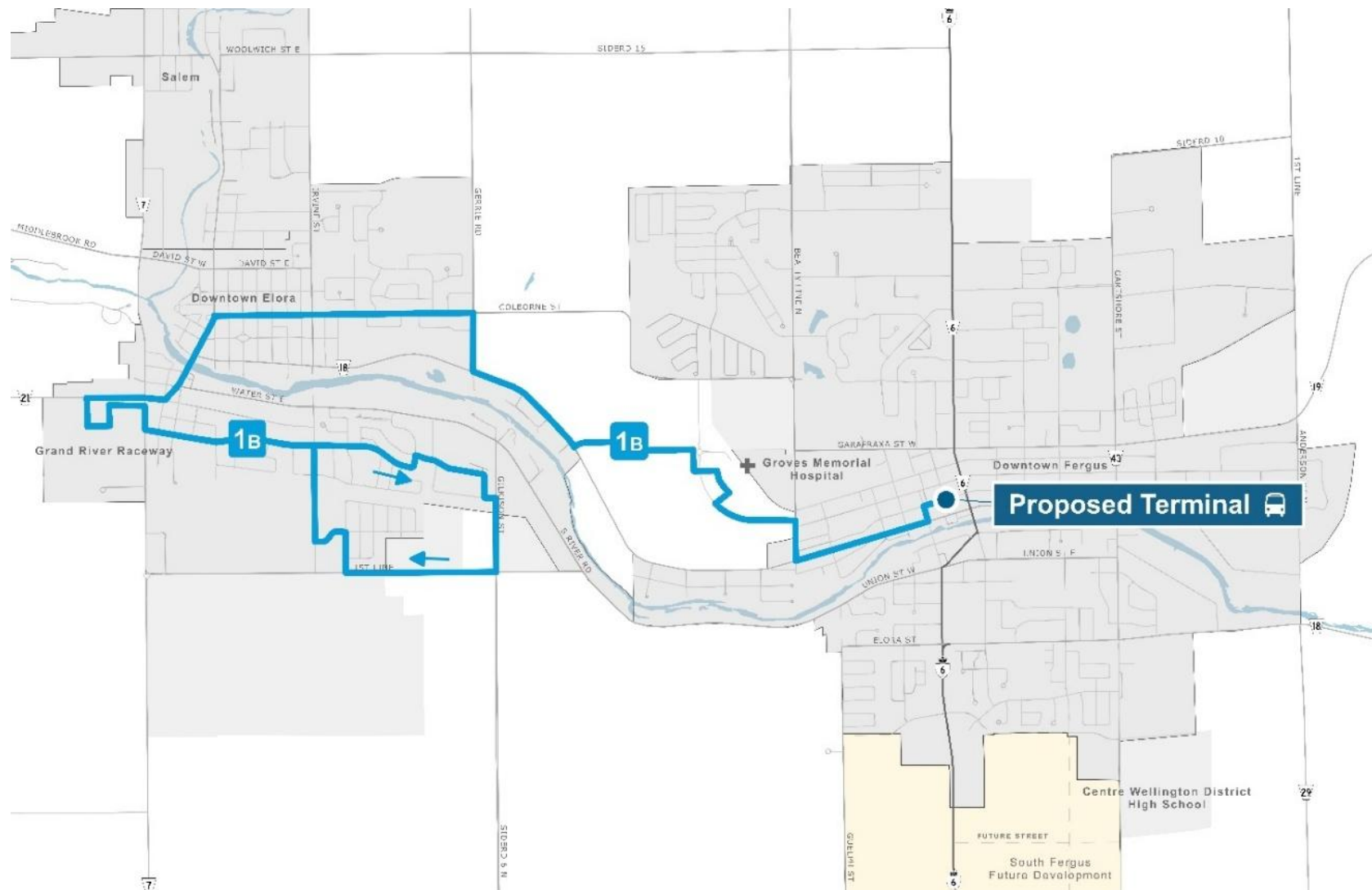


Figure 8: Proposed Route 1B Elora to Gilkison



## 9.1.5

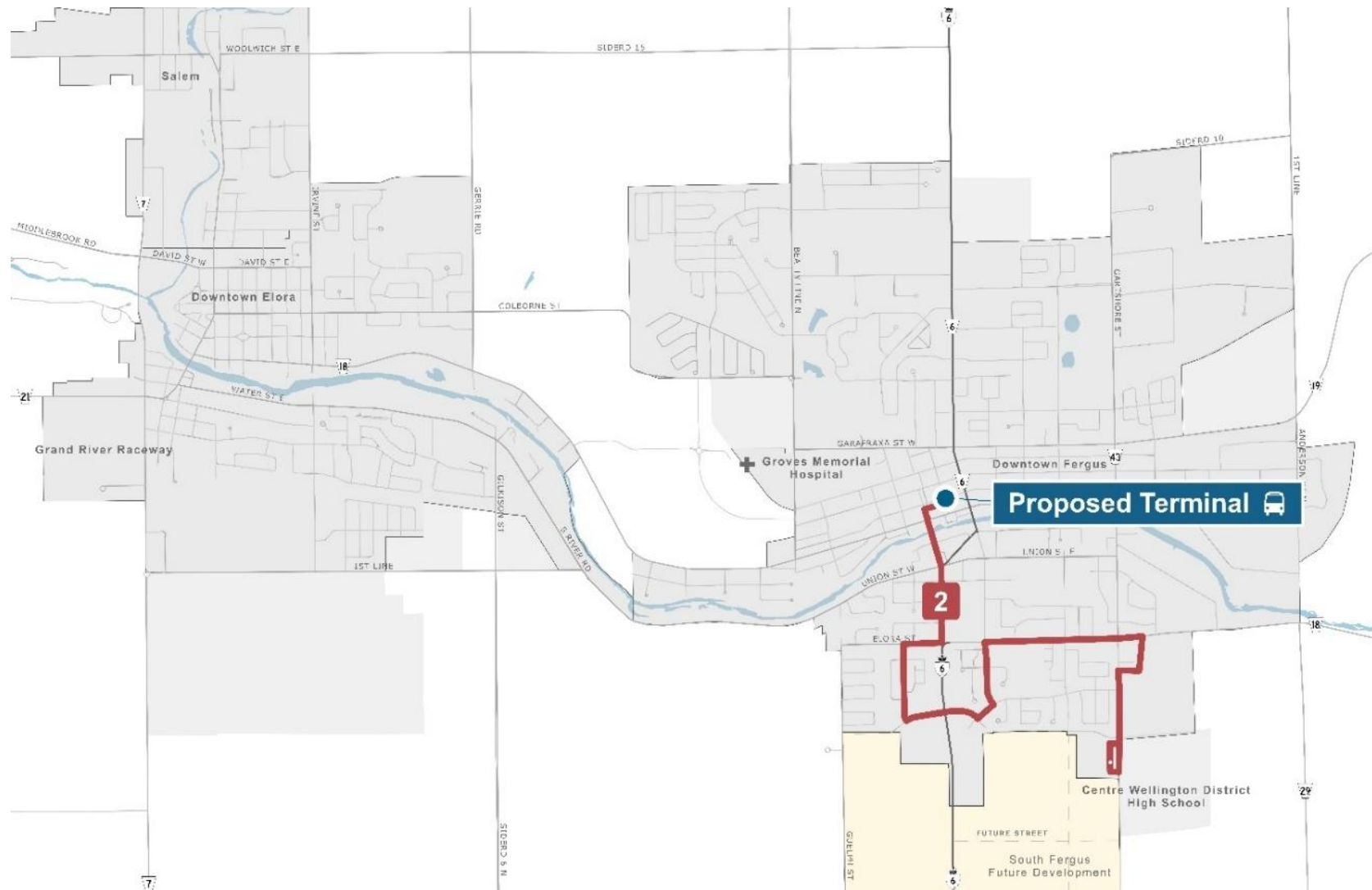
**Route 2 Belsyde**

This route has been designed as the primary connection for residents in south Fergus, especially prior to the introduction of Route 5 (see **Section 9.1.8**). The route operates between the proposed terminal in Downtown Fergus and CWDHS, stopping on route at Aberdeen Street, Zehrs Fergus, other commercial destinations along Highway 6 in south Fergus, Emmanuel Christian High School, apartments along Belsyde Avenue, and the Centre Wellington Sportsplex. The southern terminal of the route at CWDHS is subject to an agreement with the Upper Grand District School Board. If access to the property is not viable, looping could potentially occur via McQueen Boulevard, McTavish Street, and Millburn Boulevard.

From implementation, this route would be planned to operate on a 60-minute headway, with one vehicle shared with Route 3. Through the implementation period, a vehicle would be dedicated to Route 2, and the frequency would be improved to every 30 minutes. This route is anticipated to be well-used, in part due to the major commercial destinations, high-density apartments, and high schools located along the route.

**Figure 9** below shows the proposed routing.

Figure 9: Proposed Route 2 Belsyde



## 9.1.6

**Route 3 St. David – Farley**

Route 3 is focused on providing service to the northwestern areas of Fergus, including new communities along Farley Road. The route would operate from the proposed terminal in Downtown Fergus to the Groves Memorial Community Hospital. The routing is direct to maintain competitive travel times with driving. Good walking coverage is created along either side of the route, both in newer and older neighbourhoods in Fergus. Service along Side Road 18 provides coverage to the Strathlea subdivision and potential future infill and intensification development along the corridor.

Similar to Route 2, this route is expected to have stable ridership, as it passes by many of the grocery stores and other major commercial destinations along St. David Street. The arrival and departure routing around the proposed terminal in Fergus has been designed to minimize potential delays caused by unsignalized left-turns on St. David. This route will see the same phased approach as Route 2, with headways every 60 minutes at implementation and an eventual improvement to every 30 minutes. Strategically placed bus stops, including at trails and pedestrian cut-throughs, will enhance coverage. **Figure 10** is a map of the proposed alignment of Route 3.

Figure 10: Proposed Route 3 St. David – Farley



## 9.1.7

**Route 4 Gartshore**

When this route is introduced, it will improve service to industrial areas in northeast Fergus, and improved coverage to neighbourhoods north of the Grand River. This service has been designed as a later introduction in the route network, and area coverage would be provided by on-demand service until the route's introduction. This route is anticipated to have less immediate demand compared to Routes 1, 2, and 3. This route will offer an alternative between downtown and the commercial area at Gordon Street and St. David Street. An on-street loop using Elizabeth, Campbell, and Woodhill would improve coverage to the neighbourhoods west of St. David, behind the Walmart. Through analysis, it was determined these streets are suitable for the type of vehicles that would be used by the fixed-route network (similar to the model currently used by the Downtown Shuttle). Any layover time would be scheduled at the terminal, so the bus is not stopped in the neighbourhood for an extended period. Access to the proposed terminal in Fergus would be made using the same routing as Route 3, minimizing delays.

This route would be implemented in later phases using an expansion vehicle, with eventual daytime frequencies of every 30 minutes. On-demand coverage would be provided on Saturdays and Sundays, subject to observed ridership levels. **Figure 11** details the proposed route.



## 9.1.8

**Route 5 Scotland**

The final route contained within this proposed network is an additional route to improve coverage in south Fergus. Specifically, this route would improve service along Union Street, Scotland Street, and future development in the South Fergus Secondary Plan Area. This route would also add new options to the Centre Wellington Sportsplex and the commercial areas south along Highway 6. This route would be implemented in later phases of the project and would include an expansion vehicle, ultimately providing service every 30 minutes along the route. The route would also start and end at the proposed terminal in Downtown Fergus, where timed connections would be provided to other routes. **Figure 12** shows the proposed alignment for this route, with respect for the anticipated road network in the future development areas of South Fergus. The looping arrangement at the south end of the route, conceptually using the Zehrs plaza at Highway 6 and McQueen Boulevard, would be subject to agreements with property owners. Alternatively, an on-street looping arrangement could be used in this area.

Figure 12: Proposed Route 5 Scotland



## 9.2 On-Demand Transit Recommendation

It is recommended that urban and rural on-demand transit service continue to be operated by RIDE WELL. It is assumed that this service could continue to be provided using one vehicle, with the potential to expand to two if ridership warrants.

Under this model, the fares for on-demand trips within the urban area of Elora, Fergus and Salem would be the same as the urban fixed-route services, however, on-demand trips would only be available in areas that are outside of a 500-metre walking distance from a fixed-route service. These on-demand trips would connect to key stops in the proposed fixed-route network to allow passengers to complete their trip on the fixed-route network. For trips starting and ending in rural areas, door-to-door service would be provided.

Fixed-route service to rural communities of Centre Wellington was explored, particularly to Belwood and Inverhaugh. At this time, it is not recommended to proceed with fixed-routes to other rural communities within the Township, as demand forecasting indicated ridership below what is considered the threshold for fixed route ridership. With greater dedication of a RIDE WELL vehicle to this rural area, transit service levels in the rural communities of the Township would be improved. Should future growth warrant a fixed-route service, this could be phased in by operating during periods of higher demand, including seasonally or during peak periods. The pulse design of the network allows for the simple addition of new routes, so long as they meet the network design principles.

## 9.3 Regional Transit Recommendation

It is recommended that regional transit be provided in two streams:

- Fixed-route connection to Guelph Central Station (provided in partnership with other municipalities and the County of Wellington).
- On-demand RIDE WELL connection to Elmira in the Region of Waterloo.

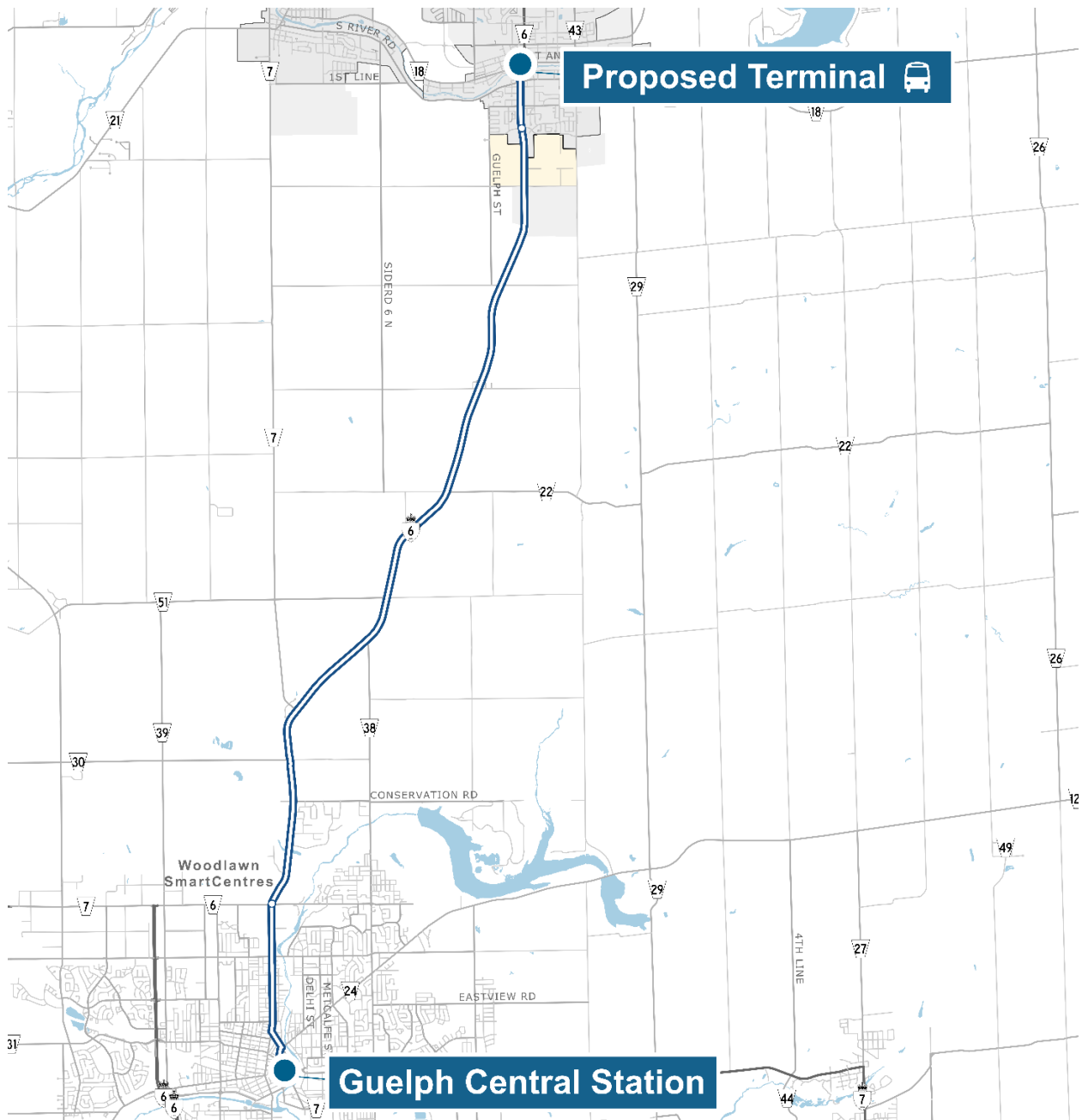
The fixed-route regional transit service would operate directly from the proposed transit terminal in Fergus to Guelph Central Station using one bus along Highway 6, timed for both GO Train and local transit connections where feasible. Should observed run times

permit, stops are also recommended at Highway 6 and McQueen Boulevard in Fergus, and at the Woodlawn SmartCentres in Guelph. **Figure 13** illustrates the proposed route.

This service would compliment the Guelph Owen Sound Transit (GOST) route and be timed so it does not duplicate this service. Once the urban transit service is implemented in Centre Wellington, it is recommended that the Township work with Owen Sound and the County to revise the stop locations to stop at the terminal in Fergus and remove the stop in Elora. This will help reduce travel time to Guelph and connect to the urban transit service.

From implementation, this regional transit service would make six round trips daily between Fergus and Guelph, scheduled around the GOST service that currently operates along the Highway 6 corridor. The primary focus would be providing important commuter links between the local transit network, Guelph Transit, and GO Transit. In the future, this service should match the local network hours of operation. Weekend service should be considered, even with limited service, to help meet visitor, student, and employment needs.

Figure 13: Proposed Regional Route, Fergus to Guelph



The operation and funding model of this route should be negotiated with the County of Wellington and consider potential external funding opportunities to support the service.

The RIDE WELL service to Elmira, in the Township of Woolwich, would be the connecting point between Centre Wellington and the Region of Waterloo. Grand River Transit provides fixed-route service every 30 minutes between Elmira and the ION Light Rail Transit (LRT) at Conestoga Station. Elmira would serve as the access point to the transit network in Waterloo Region, while limiting the time that RIDE WELL vehicles spend operating outside of Wellington County. This would also provide a connection to the Perth County (PC) Connect bus service to Listowel in the Municipality of North Perth.

#### 9.4 Specialized Transit Recommendation

Specialized transit, or a similar accessible parallel transit service, is required to ensure AODA compliance of conventional (fixed-route) transit services in the Township. This service would provide door-to-door service for those who are unable to use conventional transit due to a disability. The County of Wellington currently provides accessible on-demand service with the intent of accommodating passengers with disabilities, and Centre Wellington should work with the County to ensure specialized trips can be accommodated within the Township at the hours and fares set for local service.

Currently, only one of the RIDE WELL vehicles is an accessible van that can accommodate mobility devices. With the expansion of conventional transit service within Fergus, Elora and Salem, the existing RIDE WELL vehicle that is being used by the County to provide service in Centre Wellington should be converted to an accessible vehicle to accommodate specialized transit trips. This dedicated RIDE WELL vehicle would accommodate all trip requests in the rural and urban areas that don't have a fixed-route, and only specialized transit trips in the urban area where it duplicates a fixed-route.

#### 9.5 Fare Structure Recommendation

A fare structure for the transit network was developed with respect to both the peer transit agencies and the unique needs of Centre Wellington. There are three primary fares which will apply within the Township.

- Local fares for the urban fixed-route and specialized transit services;
- On-demand fares for RIDE WELL trips made within the rural areas of Centre Wellington; and
- Regional transit services that serve the proposed Fergus terminal.

Importantly, the fares for RIDE WELL and regional transit services will ultimately be determined by the funding municipality. In the proposed scenario for both services, it is recommended that the County of Wellington continue to be responsible for base rural on-demand RIDE WELL service and take on responsibility for regional transit. Therefore, the recommended fares for these services should be discussed with the County and take into consideration all connecting transit services.

#### 9.5.1 Urban Fares

For all trips within the urban area of Fergus, Elora and Salem, which includes the fixed-route network, urban RIDE WELL on-demand services and specialized transit trips, a flat cash fare of \$3.50 is recommended. This flat cash fare is in line with local peer transit agencies, and the need to ensure sustainable cost recovery levels within the urban transit network.

#### 9.5.2 Rural Fares

For rural trips within Centre Wellington provided by RIDE WELL, the current fare structure will be maintained. The RIDE WELL fare structure is distanced based, at \$0.60 per kilometre, with a minimum cost of \$5.00. Transfers should be provided between rural trips and the urban network.

#### 9.5.3 Regional Transit Service Fares

The regional service fare structure should be determined by the County of Wellington through an ongoing Unified Regional Transit Network study that the County is participating in, in partnership with Grey, Bruce and Dufferin Counties. The regional transit service fare between Elora/Fergus and Guelph is currently \$5.00 on the GOST route. This fare should be consistent with the future fare structure recommendations from the Unified Regional Transit Network study.

#### 9.5.4 Transfers and Fare Integration

The proposed fare structure within the urban area of Fergus, Elora and Salem is recommended to include an unlimited 90-minute transfer, meaning passengers can board vehicles an unlimited number of times within 90 minutes of their initial fare payment. This is both an affordability and convenience measure, allowing stopovers and return trips on single fares, so long as they are made within this time window.

For passengers transferring between services, they would only need to pay the fare difference between the urban / rural and regional fares, or urban fixed-route and on-demand fares. For example, a passenger transferring from the local urban fixed-route network would only pay the difference between the \$3.50 local fare and the regional transit fare. Equally, for passengers transferring from the regional service to the urban or rural services, they would pay the fare difference upon boarding the regional service vehicle. The Township and the County should collaboratively develop fare reconciliation agreements to support integrated fare structures amongst the three transit services.

For transfers between RIDE WELL rural services and the urban service, the transfer to the urban service would be free. For reverse trip, the urban service would also be free if the passenger shows the paid RIDE WELL fare to the bus operator.

#### 9.5.5 Monthly Fares

In the short-term, a monthly pass is recommended for unlimited trips in the urban Township service area, to be set at \$94.50. This is the equivalent to 27 single fare payments, a threshold similar to peer agencies.

Monthly passes for the regional services would be subject to coordination and discussions with the County. Should the \$5.00 fare between Fergus and Guelph be maintained (as it currently is on the GOST service), the 27-trip threshold would be equivalent to \$135.00.

The Province of Ontario is currently expanding and modernizing the PRESTO fare collection and payment system. Opportunities exist with new technologies to integrate fare technology across transit agencies and service providers. In the future, this could also allow fare integration with the GO Transit network at Guelph Central Station, making transit a simpler and affordable option for passengers. Further discussions with

partners, including Metrolinx, the Ministry of Transportation, and the County of Wellington will be required to identify and deliver these opportunities.

#### 9.5.5.1 Fare Capping

In the future, with a PRESTO-supported fare collection system, fare capping could be implemented in place of an unlimited monthly pass. Fare capping uses technology, like a smartcard or a debit/credit card, to automatically keep track of the number of transit trips made within a certain timeframe (typically 30 days or a calendar month). Instead of paying the full amount of a monthly pass at the start of the month, the card keeps track of the number of rides taken and caps the fares at the set threshold (in this case, 27 trips). After this threshold is met, remaining trips made within the month are free to the passenger. Fare capping is an affordability measure, meaning passengers don't need to have the full monthly pass amount at the start of the month, while still benefitting from an unlimited ride discount. Nearby transit agencies, like Guelph Transit and GO Transit, both use monthly fare capping instead of traditional monthly passes.

#### 9.5.6 Concession Fares and Affordable Pass Program

In line with industry best practices, fare-free travel is recommended for children 12 years and younger. This makes transit more affordable for families and creates opportunities to build familiarity with riding local transit in the Township.

An affordable transit program is recommended to address any affordability challenges that residents may encounter. This is an alternative approach from age-based discounts that provides reduced fares based on income. This affordable pass program would need to be developed in line with transit service partners (including the County of Wellington) and should provide 50% discounts on all fares.

#### 9.5.7 Summary of Recommended Fares

**Table 21** below illustrates the recommended fare structure for all services. As noted above, the fare for regional services will ultimately be contingent on discussions with the County of Wellington.

For the purposes of calculating fare revenue in **Section 11.0**, an average fare of \$2.00 was used for the local urban service based on the affordable pass program, monthly pass usage, and free fares for children under the age of 12. For the regional service, an

average fare of \$3.33 was assumed, similarly based on transferring passengers, monthly fares, and children under the age of 12.

**Table 21: Recommended Fare Structure**

| <b>Fare Type</b>                | <b>Local Urban Transit<br/>(Fixed-Route and Specialized)</b> | <b>Rural On-demand Trips within Centre Wellington</b> | <b>Regional Service</b> | <b>Local to Regional Service Transfer, 'Top-up' fare</b> |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Single Fare                     | \$3.50                                                       | \$5.00 plus \$0.60/kilometre                          | \$5.00                  | \$1.50                                                   |
| Child Fare (under 12)           | Free                                                         | Free                                                  | Free                    | Free                                                     |
| Monthly Pass                    | \$94.50                                                      | Not applicable                                        | \$135.00                | \$135.00                                                 |
| Affordable Program Single Fare  | \$1.75                                                       | \$1.75                                                | \$3.00                  | \$1.25                                                   |
| Affordable Program Monthly Pass | \$47.25                                                      | Not applicable                                        | \$67.50                 | \$67.50                                                  |

The 'top-up' fare is for passengers transferring between local routes and the regional service to Guelph. This fare would credit those passengers who have a valid local transfer, who would then pay the difference (in this case, \$1.50) to complete their journey to Guelph. Equally, for passengers travelling from Guelph to Fergus, their regional fare would include a free transfer to the local routes. Collaboration must occur with the County of Wellington to ensure fares of on-demand service (RIDE WELL) and the regional service are integrated with local routes.

## 9.6

### Round 2 Key Engagement Themes, What We Heard

Between January 30 and February 22, 2026, the Township invited residents to share feedback on the proposed transit routes and fares through an online survey on the Connect CW platform.

There were 144 contributors of which 60% live in Fergus, 26% live in Elora, with smaller numbers from Salem (5%), Belwood (4%), Ennotville, and Inverhaugh. Around half of respondents are employed full-time and 30% are retired, with smaller groups of part-time workers (7%), multi-job holders, and students.

Feedback we heard is organized below by theme. Feedback received from the public was incorporated into the final service plan discussed above.

#### 9.6.1 Route Preferences

- Routes 1A (Elora-Salem) and 1B (Elora-Gilkison) received less ridership interest than other routes.
- Route 2 (Belsyde) had the strongest demand within Fergus, with 10% daily and 22% weekly users, and the lowest “rarely/never” response at 49%.
- Daily use across Fergus routes ranged from 6% to 10%.
- The proposed route between Fergus and Guelph Central Station got the most support. About 64% of respondents said they would use it at least monthly (10% daily, 18% weekly, 36.8% monthly).

#### 9.6.2 Fare Expectations

- A clear majority (72%) feel a fare of \$3.00 to \$4.00 is reasonable for local trips, and a fare of \$5.00 to \$7.50 would be reasonable to Guelph.

#### 9.6.3 Other Key Comments and Suggestions

- Strong interest in access to Guelph Central Station.
- Requests for specific stops at the Trailside Medical Building, Hospital, LifeLabs, Victoria Park Seniors Centre, CW Food Bank, and the Fergus industrial park.
- Call for sheltered waiting areas at stops.
- Preference for express routes and more frequent service, with some noting timetables felt unrealistic.

Generally, feedback from Round 2 of engagement supported the proposed network, resulting in some minor modifications to the plan. This included a more accelerated phasing plan that implements Route 1A and 1B each with 60-minute headways. These modifications were made and included in this report. Additionally, due diligence was undertaken to ensure the proposed network has realistic scheduling for the pulse route network design.

## 10.0

## Phasing Plan

The following section expands on the Phasing Plan for the urban service identified in **Section 9.1**, and identifies the key actions that should be taken to implement the transit service.

Phase 1 is expected to take two years and includes planning for the introduction of a transit service. Minor post-implementation adjustments are expected to be made during this phase. Phase 2 is also identified to operate for 2 years and will include route expansion and service improvements to the Phase 1 system. Phase 3 includes the full build-out of the transit network, with improved hours of operation.

## 10.1

### Phase 1

## 10.1.1

#### Urban Transit Service

- Introduce Route 1 seven days per week with 60-minute frequencies on each branch.
  - 1A Elora to Salem to operate every 60 minutes.
  - 1B Elora to Gilkison to operate every 60 minutes.
- Introduce Route 2 Belsyde seven days per week with 60-minute frequency.
- Introduce Route 3 St. David – Farley seven days per week with 60-minute frequency.
- The initial hours of operation will be limited:
  - Monday to Friday service provided from 6:00 AM to 8:00 PM
  - Saturday and Sunday service from 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM

## 10.1.2

#### RIDE WELL

- Work with the County of Wellington to change the RIDE WELL service operating in Centre Wellington to utilize an accessible vehicle. This could occur in the second year of operation.

## 10.1.3

#### Regional Service

- Work with the County of Wellington to introduce a regional service between Fergus and Guelph along the Highway 6 corridor, supplementing the GOST service.

- Work with the County of Wellington to introduce regional service between Fergus and Guelph with six daily round-trips Monday-Friday, and two daily round trips on Saturday and Sunday.

#### 10.1.4 Infrastructure

- Conduct a functional design of the multi-modal transit terminal in downtown Fergus.
- Work with the County of Wellington to develop the Fergus multi-modal transit terminal, which will be the connection point between local fixed-routes, RIDE WELL, and regional services.
- Identify bus stop locations along the proposed route network and install signs, focusing on areas with paved surfaces and connected sidewalks.

### 10.2 Phase 2

#### 10.2.1 Urban Transit Service

- Improve frequencies to every 30-minutes on Route 2 Belsyde and Route 3 St. David – Farley, seven days per week.
- Extend Monday to Friday hours of operation to end at 9:00 PM for the local transit network and on-demand/specialized transit in the urban and rural area.
- Introduce Route 4 Gartshore with 60-minute frequency, Monday to Friday.
- Introduce Route 5 Scotland with 60-minute frequency, Monday to Friday.

#### 10.2.2 Regional Service

- Work with the County of Wellington to improve regional service to Guelph by adding two round-trips on weekdays and weekends.

#### 10.2.3 RIDE WELL

- Work with the County of Wellington to provide weekend coverage in Fergus using RIDE WELL for areas beyond the fixed-route network.

### 10.3 Phase 3

#### 10.3.1 Urban Transit Service

- Improve Route 4 Gartshore to 30-minute weekday frequency.
- Improve Route 5 Scotland to 30-minute weekday frequency.
- Extend Saturday service from 8:00 AM to 10:00 PM for the local network and on-demand.
- Extend Sunday service from 9:00 AM to 8:00 PM for local network and on-demand.

#### 10.3.2 Regional Service

- Work with the County of Wellington to improve regional service to Guelph to operate hourly all-day service Monday to Friday.

### 10.4 Summary

The planned implementation phases will allow for a responsible approach to implementing local transit service in Centre Wellington. While recognizing the important network aspects of a transit service, where passengers are reliant on multiple bus routes to complete their journeys, the fixed-routes will be implemented over time to allow for adjustments to be made as required. Additionally, introducing improved hours of operation and network coverage over time allows for a better understanding of passenger trip patterns, including any review of the network service standards and key performance indicators which may be required. This phased approach is iterative, allowing each phase to build upon one-another, improving service and growing the fixed-route network.

## 11.0

## Operating Plan and Budget

The operating budget is based on a gradual, phased implementation of the fixed-route network, supplemented through contracted RIDE WELL service. There are three primary aspects of the implementation plan:

- Introduction of local fixed-routes, prioritized through projected ridership;
- Expanded hours of operation, including earlier and later service; and
- Phased introduction of target frequencies.
- This is based on the phasing plan identified in **Section 10.0**.

## 11.1

### Transit Network Gross Operating Costs

The estimated operating costs of the network have been forecasted based on the phased implementation plan. An hourly operating cost range of \$90 to \$125 is typical for the operation of a fixed-route transit service. This range was estimated based on the existing rate charged by the contractor for the Elora and Fergus Downtown Shuttle, and peer agencies. For the purposes of the financial plan, an average hourly rate of \$110 was used.

For RIDE WELL service, the difference in the hourly rate of an accessible vehicle versus the standard non-accessible vehicle was used for the rural and specialized weekday service that operates during existing RIDE WELL hours.

It is assumed that the County would continue to operate the rural RIDE WELL service with one dedicated vehicle, Monday to Friday, from 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM only. This portion of the service would use the cost difference between the accessible and non-accessible RIDE WELL service (approximately \$20.00 an hour).

Any improvements to this on-demand service within the rural or urban areas of Centre Wellington would be paid for by Township at an estimated hourly rate of \$65.00 an hour. This includes:

- Earlier and later on-demand service, matching the fixed-route service; and
- Saturday and Sunday service, matching the fixed-route service.

The County will continue its responsibility of delivering and administering the RIDE WELL service. The dedicated on-demand vehicle within Centre Wellington would also be used for specialized transit trips. Therefore, this service has been costed at the rate charged by the RIDE WELL contractor for accessible vehicle trips.

The cost of regional services is assumed to be in addition to any through-services operated by the county or through joint regional partnerships along the Highway 6 corridor, as these services are beyond the scope of this work.

**Table 22** summarizes the anticipated operational costs for each of the fixed routes that would operate locally within Fergus and Elora, the ride-well on-demand service provided within the Township, and the regional service between Fergus and Guelph. The RIDE WELL costs only account for the portion which the Township would be responsible for, the expansion of hours of operation and weekend service. The funding arrangements for any regional services are assumed to be the responsibility of the County of Wellington, and high-level costing has been developed to understand what kind of financial performance can be expected from the service. High and low scenarios are presented, as the hourly costs will be subject to contractor negotiations.

**Table 22: Estimated Transit Network Annual Service Costs**

| Route                                  | Year 1             | Year 2             | Year 3             | Year 4             | Year 5             |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Phase                                  | Phase 1            | Phase 1            | Phase 2            | Phase 2            | Phase 3            |
| 1A                                     | \$522,500          | \$522,500          | \$550,000          | \$550,000          | \$575,000          |
| 1B                                     | \$522,500          | \$522,500          | \$550,000          | \$550,000          | \$575,000          |
| 2                                      | \$275,000          | \$275,000          | \$550,000          | \$550,000          | \$575,000          |
| 3                                      | \$275,000          | \$275,000          | \$550,000          | \$550,000          | \$575,000          |
| 4                                      | -                  | -                  | \$220,000          | \$220,000          | \$475,000          |
| 5                                      | -                  | -                  | \$220,000          | \$220,000          | \$475,000          |
| RIDE WELL                              | \$96,000           | \$96,000           | \$112,000          | \$112,000          | \$197,920          |
| <b>Total</b>                           | <b>\$1,595,000</b> | <b>\$1,595,000</b> | <b>\$2,640,000</b> | <b>\$2,640,000</b> | <b>\$3,465,000</b> |
| Regional Service <sup>2</sup> (County) | \$247,500          | \$247,500          | \$302,500          | \$302,500          | \$577,500          |

<sup>2</sup> Does not include GOST service

## 11.2 Administrative Costs

There are administrative costs associated with the implementation and operation of a transit network. This includes staffing responsibilities, advertising and promotional costs, legal fees, and other miscellaneous costs.

A transit coordinator position will be required to administer the transit contract, respond to customer inquiries, market the service, and implement this plan. For this position, the Township has included an annual cost of \$75,000 in their budget. If the transit services are delivered by the County of Wellington, opportunities exist to divide the costs associated with this position. This position could be used more efficiently by having responsibility over the local transit service, RIDE WELL, and any regional services provided by the County. In addition to this, **Table 23** below summarizes the costs for:

- Training: e.g. accessibility;
- Advertising and printing; and
- Other miscellaneous costs associated with the service.

**Table 23: Ancillary Operating Costs**

| Cost                     | Year 1          | Year 2          | Year 3          | Year 4          | Year 5          |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Transit Coordinator      | \$75,000        | \$75,000        | \$75,000        | \$75,000        | \$75,000        |
| Training                 | \$4,500         | \$2,000         | \$2,000         | \$2,000         | \$2,000         |
| Advertising and Printing | \$10,000        | \$10,000        | \$10,000        | \$10,000        | \$10,000        |
| Miscellaneous            | \$5,000         | \$5,000         | \$5,000         | \$5,000         | \$5,000         |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>\$94,500</b> | <b>\$92,000</b> | <b>\$92,000</b> | <b>\$92,000</b> | <b>\$92,000</b> |

## 11.3 Financial Plan

**Table 24** below provides a summary of the net operating costs as well as key performance indicators for the local conventional and specialized transit service. The costs of specialized transit are based on the cost difference between the existing RIDE WELL service using a non-accessible sedan and operating an accessible vehicle. The cost of increased service hours for RIDE WELL within Centre Wellington is also included below (including earlier and later service; weekend service within the Township). This is based on the five-year phasing plan identified in **Section 10.0**.

**Table 24: Five-Year Operating Cost Summary (Local Conventional and Specialized Transit)**

| <b>Indicator</b>                   | <b>Year 1</b>  | <b>Year 2</b>  | <b>Year 3</b>  | <b>Year 4</b>  | <b>Year 5</b>  |
|------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Phase</b>                       | <b>Phase 1</b> | <b>Phase 1</b> | <b>Phase 2</b> | <b>Phase 2</b> | <b>Phase 3</b> |
| Population                         | 30,800         | 32,775         | 34,734         | 36,692         | 38,650         |
| Revenue Service Hours              | 16,000         | 16,000         | 26,000         | 26,000         | 34,000         |
| Annual Ridership                   | 117,000        | 132,000        | 242,000        | 267,000        | 358,000        |
| Operating Cost                     | \$1,691,000    | \$1,691,000    | \$2,752,000    | \$2,752,000    | \$3,625,810    |
| Administrative Costs               | \$95,000       | \$92,000       | \$92,000       | \$92,000       | \$92,000       |
| Total Operating Cost               | \$1,785,000    | \$1,783,000    | \$2,844,000    | \$2,844,000    | \$3,718,000    |
| Fare Revenue                       | \$231,800      | \$261,000      | \$480,000      | \$527,000      | \$712,000      |
| Net Operating Cost                 | \$1,554,000    | \$1,522,000    | \$2,365,000    | \$2,317,000    | \$3,006,000    |
| Boardings per Capita               | 3.8            | 4.0            | 7.0            | 7.2            | 9.3            |
| Boardings per Revenue Service Hour | 7.4            | 8.3            | 9.4            | 10.3           | 10.5           |
| Service Hours per Capita           | 0.52           | 0.49           | 0.74           | 0.70           | 0.88           |
| Net Cost per Passenger             | \$13.23        | \$11.54        | \$9.79         | \$8.73         | \$8.39         |
| Net Cost per Capita                | \$50.41        | \$46.44        | \$68.08        | \$63.14        | \$77.76        |
| Revenue / Cost Ratio               | 13%            | 15%            | 17%            | 19%            | 19%            |

Annual operating costs are anticipated to be approximately \$1,500,000 in year one, increasing to approximately \$3,000,000 with the full build-out of the local network. Ridership has been estimated conservatively, and KPIs broadly fall within peer agency expectations. Importantly, the cost recovery ratio only of local transit within the urban area of Fergus and Elora is upwards of 20%, a figure in-line with peer agencies.

**Table 25** below provides a similar cost for the Regional Service. This costing does not include any through GOST services operated along the Highway 6 corridor, which is anticipated to operate three to four times per day by year five of the plan.

Administrative costs were not added to this table as it was assumed that it could be covered by the local service or the County. It should be noted that the ultimate implementation of the regional service is highly contingent on a financial contribution from the County of Wellington.

**Table 25: Five-Year Operating Cost Summary (Regional Service)**

| <b>Indicator</b>                   | <b>Year 1</b>  | <b>Year 2</b>  | <b>Year 3</b>  | <b>Year 4</b>  | <b>Year 5</b>  |
|------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Phase</b>                       | <b>Phase 1</b> | <b>Phase 1</b> | <b>Phase 2</b> | <b>Phase 2</b> | <b>Phase 3</b> |
| Population                         | 30,800         | 32,775         | 34,734         | 36,692         | 38,650         |
| Revenue Service Hours              | 2,000          | 2,000          | 3,000          | 3,000          | 5,000          |
| Annual Ridership                   | 16,000         | 16,000         | 22,000         | 25,000         | 47,000         |
| Operating Cost                     | \$248,000      | \$248,000      | \$303,000      | \$303,000      | \$578,000      |
| Fare Revenue                       | \$52,000       | \$52,000       | \$73,000       | \$82,000       | \$157,000      |
| Net Operating Cost                 | \$195,000      | \$195,000      | \$229,000      | \$220,000      | \$420,000      |
| Boardings per Capita               | 0.51           | 0.48           | 0.63           | 0.67           | 1.22           |
| Boardings per Revenue Service Hour | 7.0            | 7.0            | 8.0            | 9.0            | 9.0            |
| Net Cost per Passenger             | \$12.38        | \$12.38        | \$10.42        | \$8.89         | \$8.89         |
| Revenue / Cost Ratio               | 21%            | 21%            | 24%            | 27%            | 27%            |

The year one net costs associated with the regional service are expected to be up to \$195,000. The revenue generated by this service will be limited by the overall capacity of the vehicles if 20-passenger cutaway buses are used, and by the number of daily trips between Fergus and Guelph.

#### 11.4 External Funding Opportunities

Centre Wellington should pursue external funding opportunities in partnership with County-level transit funding initiatives. This includes both federal and provincial public

transit funding programs, both of which Wellington County is actively pursuing in partnership with other municipalities. Active collaboration is required for any external funding opportunities, in line with goals of providing an integrated suite of transit services for Centre Wellington.

The following provide a summary of funding opportunities that the Township should consider to off-set their own municipal contribution.

#### 11.4.1

#### **Ontario Transit Investment Fund**

There is a potential to access funding for a portion of the service through the Ontario Transit Investment Fund (OTIF). OTIF was launched by the Province on October 7, 2024 and provides \$10 million Province-wide each year to help begin and expand transit services in unserved and underserved areas of Ontario.

Some of the key outcomes of this funding stream is to support services that are integrated regional, seamless and sustainable, which supports integration with the RIDE WELL and GOST routes. OTIF would provide up to 50% funding for up to five years of the total service cost, which the remaining required to be matched by the applicant through municipal contributions and passenger fares. This could start with 70% coverage of the cost and scale down to 30% as long the full project total does not exceed 50%. This strategy will help municipalities reduce dependency on funding, creating sustainable services.

The Counties of Grey, Dufferin and Bruce, along with Saugeen Mobility and Regional Transit (SMART) were successful in receiving funding through OTIF to create a Unified Transit Service. The County of Wellington, while not formally part of the application, is participating in a study with these OTIF recipients to develop a plan, which includes the extension and potential expansion of the GOST route which travels through Fergus and Elora to Guelph.

There may be an opportunity to allocate a higher share of this funding to pay for part of the regional service and to apply for an amendment to this application to formally include the County and the proposed Township urban transit service.

It is recommended that staff from the Township work with the County to apply for OTIF funding if there is a decision to move forward with this transit system.

## 11.4.2

**Dedicated Gas Tax for Public Transportation Program**

The Province of Ontario allocated a dedicated portion of the provincial gas tax to municipalities that operate public transit services within the province. The allocation of this funding is based on a formula that considers both population (30% of funding formula) and transit ridership (70% of funding formula). This means that larger municipalities with a larger ridership base will get a higher portion of gas tax dollars.

It should be noted that provincial gas tax is not meant to be a replacement of municipal funding towards transit but is meant to providing funding to support ridership growth. Therefore, the funding is also based on a rule that the dedicated gas tax funds provided to each municipality are not to exceed 75% of municipal own spending on public transportation. Municipal spending is defined as both municipal contributions and passenger fares. The application of provincial gas tax for transit also requires support from Council for a permanent transit service (meaning a service that is not considered a pilot program).

If Township Council elects to implement transit as a permanent service, it can apply for provincial gas tax funding. The formula is based on ridership from the previous full year of service (2024 if collecting gas tax for the 2025/2026 horizon), therefore, the first year of gas tax would likely be minimal if applying for the service in the first year of operation.

One important consideration to note is that the calculation of provincial gas tax does not allow double counting of population when two separate municipalities provide service in the same area. The County of Wellington collects provincial gas tax for its RIDE WELL service and received \$397,205 in the 2024/2025 program year.

If the Township were to apply for gas tax separately from the County, the County would not be able to use the Centre Wellington population as part of the funding calculation, which would likely reduce the funding the County receives.

The province allows for two or more municipalities to combine their gas tax allocation by having one body collect gas tax on behalf of the other jurisdiction. In this case, it is recommended that the County collect provincial gas tax on behalf of the County, which would allow it to capture the entire population of Wellington County, allow with the ridership from RIDE WELL, the regional transit service and the urban transit service

within Fergus, Elora and Salem. It would also help ensure that both the County and the Township are maximizing their allocation. Currently, the County does not receive its full allocation because the portion allocated is more than 75% of the municipal contribution. Combining gas tax with the Township would increase the total municipal contribution and increase the allocation. The revenue received would then be split between the County and the Township based on a formula that considers each municipality's financial contribution, ridership and population.

Based on the above, it is recommended that the Township apply for provincial gas tax funding once Township Council decides to make the service permanent. This would offset the annual reduction in OTIF funding, should the County and the Township apply and be successful in the application.

## 11.4.3

**Canada Public Transit Fund (CPTF)**

The Canada Public Transit Fund (CPTF) provides permanent, predictable federal support for transit infrastructure, committing \$3 billion annually starting in the 2026 to 2027 fiscal year. Centre Wellington would have access to the Targeted Funding stream allows municipalities to apply for capital funding to support specific federal priorities such as expansion of fleet or implementation of zero-emission solutions and the expansion of active transportation networks.

One program under the Targeted Funding stream is the Rural Transit Solutions Fund (RTSF), which specifically addresses the unique logistical challenges of less densely populated areas. The Township could apply for Capital Projects funding for the purchase of vehicles (such as minivans or small buses) and the construction of supporting infrastructure for up to \$10 million dollars with an approved feasibility study or transit master plan in place. The funding would provide 80% of the requested cost if approved.

The application stream is currently closed, but the Township should continue to monitor this and apply for funding to purchase vehicles and build the transit terminal if the stream is open. If funding is used to procure vehicles, then these could be leased to the contractor to operate and maintain, which would reduce the hourly contracted rate by between 10 to 15%.

## 11.4.4

**Development Charges**

Through the application of Development Charges, the development community contributes an appropriate share of infrastructure capital costs for necessary growth-related transit improvements over the ten-year planning period. DCs are a tool for municipalities to ensure that “growth pays for growth”. With the introduction of transit, the Township can offset the cost of the capital investment (vehicles and infrastructure) through DCs. This would only apply to expansion capital that is funded by the Township. Any portions of capital that are funded by government grants are not eligible. This is discussed in more detail in **Section 12.5**.

The introduction of a new transit system will require investments in capital assets. The following section outlines the capital requirements, including estimated costs, and other considerations important for asset planning. Project Fact Sheets for each of the capital assets are included in **Appendix B**.

## 12.0

## Capital Asset Plan

The introduction of a new transit system will require investments in capital assets. The following section outlines the capital requirements, including estimated costs, and other considerations important for asset planning. Project Fact Sheets for each of the capital assets are included in **Appendix B**.

## 12.1

### Fleet Capital Costs

It is recommended for the service to be contracted to a private operator. This contract should include the operator supplying vehicles, vehicle maintenance, and fleet storage. Contracting the service allows for accelerated implementation timelines and reduced capital expenses in the short term.

Over time, as the service matures, vehicles can be purchased by the Township with external funding opportunities. In this scenario, the Township would need to revise the contract with the bus operator to operate and maintain Township owned vehicles. This could reduce the service hour rate of the contract by up to 15%.

It is recommended for the transit service use cutaway-type vehicles similar to the bus currently used by the Elora and Fergus Downtown Shuttle.

The vehicles used for the local fixed-route and the regional service must be fully accessible and AODA/ Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)-compliant. This means that the vehicles must be wheelchair accessible, either through a low-floor ramp or lift. The vehicles must also be fitted with on-board technology, including a next stop announcement system, live vehicle tracking, integration with trip planning apps, and integrated fare collection equipment.

The vehicle used for the regional service between Fergus and Guelph would be the responsibility of the County, and it is assumed to be a similar model to that which is currently used on the GOST service. Currently, the GOST service uses an accessible 20-seat minibus, which includes a space for wheelchairs. An example of this vehicle type is included in **Figure 14** below.

**Figure 14: Example of a Wheelchair Accessible 20-Passenger Minibus**



The estimated cost for this type of vehicle, including on-board technology, would be between \$200,000 and \$250,000.

As the system evolves and the Township considers purchasing vehicles, consideration should be made to utilizing low-floor accessible vehicles instead of the high-floor ones described above. These would cost anywhere from \$300,000 to \$500,000, depending on the size.

The on-demand service (within the rural areas and urban areas not covered by the fixed-route network) would continue to be delivered by RIDE WELL, a service provided by the County of Wellington. Any vehicles required for this service, which includes accessible door-to-door transit, are to be procured through existing RIDE WELL contracting and operating arrangements. The existing fleet used for the RIDE WELL service uses non-accessible sedans owned by the service drivers. With the need incorporate this with a

specialized transit service, this would need to switch to an accessible mini-van, similar to the one used by the County for its specialized transit service. The cost of an equipped accessible minivan is approximately \$80,000 to \$90,000. An example of this vehicle type is illustrated below. Currently, the contractor provides the vehicle as part of the operating contract with the County.

**Figure 15: Example of an Accessible Mini-Van Used for Specialized Transit**



**Table 26** provides the projected vehicle requirements. In the short-term, these vehicles will be provided by the service contractor. As funding becomes available through provincial or federal funding opportunities, consideration can be made to bring vehicle ownership can be brought in-house. This could be operated and maintained by the contractor, which would lower the hourly operating cost.

**Table 26: Vehicle Requirements**

| <b>Vehicle Type</b>                     | <b>Phase 1</b> | <b>Phase 2</b> | <b>Phase 3</b> |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 20 passenger Minibus (urban service)    | 3              | 5              | 6              |
| Spare Minibus (urban service)           | 1              | 1              | 2              |
| 20 passenger minibus (Regional service) | 1              | 1              | 1              |
| Accessible minivan                      | 1              | 1              | 1              |
| <b>Total Vehicles</b>                   | <b>6</b>       | <b>8</b>       | <b>10</b>      |

**12.2****Bus Stop Infrastructure**

Each bus stop will require some level of accessible infrastructure. For the recommended fleet type of 20-passenger minibus, providing barrier-free access for passengers is the key requirement to ensure that services are accessible. Depending on the vehicle models procured for the service, this will impact the precise standards necessary for providing accessible service.

To meet minimum AODA standards, requirements include:

- A bus stop sign mounted in a conspicuous location;
- An unobstructed hard surface or concrete pad to permit wheelchair boarding and sidewalk access (at least two metres deep from the curb, and at least 1.5 metres wide); and
- Barrier-free connections to the nearest sidewalk or a ramp to street level in locations where sidewalks are not available.

Consideration should also be made to add a shelter and/or bench at high boarding stops and at locations identified with higher accessibility needs. For example, at the Groves Memorial Community Hospital, grocery stores, and near retirement homes.

Bus stops should be located at safe and accessible pedestrian crossings to ensure connections with the pedestrian network. Preference should be given to locations with clear sightlines and good lighting to support passenger safety and comfort as well as roads where winter maintenance is prioritized.

It is estimated that the cost of a standard bus stop with a bus stop sign and bus pad is approximately \$3,500, depending on local engineering constraints and the need for a shelter. Where there is already a hard surface, the cost could be as low as \$500 to install a bus stop sign.

While a detailed assessment was not completed at this time, it was assumed that based on the recommended route structure, up to 185 bus stops would be required. This count is based on each side of the street, as both sides require infrastructure.

**Table 27** illustrates the estimated required bus stops for each year of the plan. For costing purposes, an average unit cost of \$2,000 was used. This number assumes approximately 50% of bus stops would only require a sign and the remaining would require an accessible landing pad. This assumes there are already areas on the proposed route network that have an accessible hard surface, and that accessible pad would not be poured on some residential local roads. It also assumes that opportunities exist to bundle infrastructure costs with other road or capital infrastructure renewal initiatives.

In addition to the above cost, it was assumed that 10% of stops would have a shelter to provide a dry space for passengers to wait during inclement weather conditions. An average cost of a shelter was assumed to be \$10,000. It should be noted that the number of stops and shelters are estimated, and a more detailed stop placement plan will need to be conducted. For shelters, the capital costs of these could be off-set of the Township enters into an agreement with an advertising company to install them in exchange of advertising space rights.

**Table 27: Bus Stop Installation Costs per Year**

| <b>Bus Stop Feature</b> | <b>Phase 1</b>   | <b>Phase 2</b>   | <b>Phase 3</b>   | <b>Total</b>     |
|-------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Number of Bus Stops     | 75               | 68               | 41               | 184              |
| Number of Shelters      | 8                | 7                | 4                | 19               |
| Bus Stops Costs         | \$150,000        | \$136,000        | \$82,000         | \$368,000        |
| Bus Shelters Costs      | \$80,000         | \$70,000         | \$40,000         | \$190,000        |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>\$230,000</b> | <b>\$206,000</b> | <b>\$122,000</b> | <b>\$558,000</b> |

### 12.3 Proposed Transit Terminal

As part of the proposed transit network, it is recommended to design and construct a multi-modal transit terminal in downtown Fergus, connecting local transit to rural on-demand and regional transit services. This terminal will facilitate easy transfers between the proposed local routes serving Elora and Fergus, centrally located within Fergus. The recommended transit network plan would require space for up to five vehicles in Phase 1 of the plan, increasing to seven vehicles in Phase 3.

The recommended transit terminal location is in the vicinity of the municipal parking lot at Provost Lane and St. Patrick Street West in downtown Fergus that is already owned by the Township. This facility should be designed to accommodate five to nine 20-passenger minibuses, and include basic passenger amenities like shelters, seating, and trip planning information including maps and schedules. The design should also consider the option for future expansion to accommodate 40-foot accessible transit buses as the system and ridership grows. Arrangements should permit operators to use the public washrooms located in the historic Weigh Scale Building at 150 Provost Lane.

The first step would be to conduct a functional design and costing of this facility. Phase 1 could include a simple looping arrangement within the south end parking lot, with limited additional infrastructure. Later phases of construction can include more permanent vehicle spaces and passenger amenities.

The estimated cost to conduct a functional design would be between \$15,000 to \$25,000. An additional \$10,000 to \$15,000 would then be needed to design the create tendering documents. The estimated costs of the terminal would be confirmed through the design but is anticipated to range between \$500,000 to \$1,000,000.

### 12.4 Capital Phasing Plan

Projected capital investments associated with this transit plan are summarized below in **Table 28**. These costs are subject to the procurement, design, and construction of the various infrastructure assets. From implementation, the leasing and maintenance costs of vehicles will be borne by the contractor and included within the hourly service hour rate. These costs are also subject to ongoing parallel initiatives, including regional transit services and external funding opportunities.

Should the Township decide to procure vehicles through a funding application, this would likely not occur until Phase 2 of the plan given timelines for funding and order lead time.

**Table 28: Capital Infrastructure Cost Plan**

| <b>Year</b>                   | <b>Phase 1</b>     | <b>Phase 3</b>   | <b>Phase 3</b>   | <b>Total</b>       |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Transit Terminal Design       | \$40,000           | -                | -                | <b>\$40,000</b>    |
| Transit Terminal Construction | \$1,000,000        | -                | -                | <b>\$1,000,000</b> |
| Bus Stops                     | \$150,000          | \$136,000        | \$82,000         | <b>\$368,000</b>   |
| Shelters                      | \$80,000           | \$70,000         | \$40,000         | <b>\$190,000</b>   |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>\$1,270,000</b> | <b>\$206,000</b> | <b>\$122,000</b> | <b>\$1,598,000</b> |

## 12.5 Development Charges

The application of development charges (DCs) is a tool that the Township can use to ensure the development community contributes an appropriate share of infrastructure capital costs for necessary growth-related transit improvements over the 10-year planning period. The *Development Charges Act, 1997*, as amended (DCA) regulates when and how municipalities may collect DCs.

The DCA was amended in January 2016 introducing new reporting requirements for DC background studies related to transit. These requirements include:

- The calculations that were used to prepare the estimate for the planned level of service for transit services;
- An identification of the portion of the total estimated capital costs related to the transit service that would benefit the anticipated development over the 10-year study period and after the 10-year study period;
- An identification of the anticipated excess capacity that would exist at the end of the 10-year study period;
- An assessment of ridership forecasts for all modes of transit services proposed to be funded, categorized by development types and whether the ridership will be from existing or planned development; and

- An assessment of the ridership capacity for all modes of transit services proposed to be funded by the DC.

If there is a decision to move forward with a transit service in the Township, the Township's current DC by-law could be updated to include the provision of transit.

## 12.5.1

**Population and Ridership Growth**

The study period for the new Development Charge By-law is assumed to be between 2027 and 2036. A post-period horizon of 15 years (from early 2037 to 2051) was used to calculate the post-period benefit.

**Table 29** presents the population growth anticipated in Centre Wellington. Existing ridership is based on services provided by RIDE WELL and GOST within Centre Wellington. The 2027 and 2031 forecasts are based on the detailed service plan developed in **Section 9.0** of this report, while the 2036 (10-year) and 2046 (port-period) forecasts are based on the ridership per capita estimates identified in **Section 5.0**. These are preliminary estimates and should be updated based on Council decision to move forward with the transit study and as part of a Development Charge by-law update.

**Table 29: Centre Wellington Population and Ridership Forecast 2026 to 2051**

| <b>Service Area</b>     | <b>2027</b>    | <b>2031</b>    | <b>2036</b>    | <b>2046</b>      | <b>2051</b>      |
|-------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| Urban Population        | 32,500         | 38,700         | 42,600         | 47,800           | 50,400           |
| Rural Population        | 7,300          | 7,400          | 7,500          | 7,700            | 7,800            |
| <b>Total Population</b> | <b>39,800</b>  | <b>46,100</b>  | <b>50,100</b>  | <b>55,500</b>    | <b>58,200</b>    |
| Urban Ridership         | 117,000        | 358,000        | 553,800        | 957,400          | 1,159,200        |
| Regional Ridership      | 16,000         | 47,000         | 80,100         | 138,500          | 167,700          |
| <b>Total Ridership</b>  | <b>133,000</b> | <b>405,000</b> | <b>633,900</b> | <b>1,095,900</b> | <b>1,326,900</b> |

## 12.5.2

**Growth Related Capital Summary**

A summary 10-year capital plan of projects supporting the growth in urban and regional transit service is noted in **Table 30**. The capital plan reflects costs assuming the Township will purchase each asset and there is no provincial or federal funding that would off-set the purchase of these assets.

Changes in the table below would need to be made should the Township:

- Receive federal or provincial grant (e.g. the Rural Transit Solutions Fund or Provincial Gas Tax) to purchase vehicles or infrastructure (terminal and bus stops). In this scenario, only the portion not covered by the funding source would be an eligible DC expense
- Have a contractor provide vehicles as part of its operating contract. In this scenario, expansion vehicles are still DC eligible, however, the contractor would need to identify the portion of the hourly rate that is included to reflect the lifecycle cost of the vehicles.

**Table 30: 10-Year 2026 to 2036 Capital Plan**

| <b>Item</b>                   | <b>Unit Price<br/>(2025)</b> | <b>Quantity<br/>(2027 to 2036)</b> | <b>10-Year<br/>Capital Cost</b> |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Minibus                       | \$250,000                    | 9                                  | \$2,250,000                     |
| Transit Terminal Study        | \$40,000                     | 1                                  | \$40,000                        |
| Transit Terminal <sup>3</sup> | \$1,000,000                  | 1                                  | \$1,000,000                     |
| Bus Stops                     | \$2,000                      | 184                                | \$368,000                       |
| Transit Shelters              | \$10,000                     | 19                                 | \$190,000                       |
| Future Ridership Study        | \$100,000                    | 1                                  | \$100,000                       |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>Not Applicable</b>        | <b>Not Applicable</b>              | <b>\$3,948,000</b>              |

In addition to the capital items identified in this plan, it was also assumed that a Transit Master Plan study would be completed within 10 years. This was also included in the budget estimate.

<sup>3</sup> Note: The cost could range between \$500,000 to \$1,000,000, to be confirmed through the functional design

## 12.5.3

**Benefit to Existing and Growth**

The 2016 DCA requires that the increased need for service be reduced by the extent to which a service would benefit existing population. The in-period benefit is therefore further broken down into benefit to existing populations and benefit to growth populations.

In addition to this, the 2016 DCA requires that no portion of the service intended to benefit anticipated development within the ten-year study period remain as excess capacity at the end of the ten-year study period. For the purposes of this study, in-period is identified as the period from early 2027 to early 2036 and the post-period is assumed to be from early 2036 to early 2046.

For urban buses and stops/shelters, the implementation of the transit service would benefit the estimated 2027 population of 32,500, and the 10-year urban growth population of 10,100.

For the regional service, the transit terminal and the transit master plan, there is a need to also incorporate the population growth within the Rural area and combine it with the urban area. During this period, the rural population of 7,300 would grow by 200 people.

Benefit to growth is determined by calculating the percent of population growth by dividing the 2027-2026 population growth over the 2036 population for both the urban and rural areas. This calculates the benefit to growth with the remainder apportioned to the existing population.

To calculate post-period benefit, the expected population growth between 2036 and 2046 was calculated to determine the future growth population that would benefit from the in-period investment in transit. This was used to further split the in-period benefit to growth and post-period benefit to growth. This is illustrated in **Table 31**.

It should be noted that this represents a high-level calculation. If the Township decides to move forward with the transit service, this should be updated to reflect the preferred plan, updated population forecasts as well as density calculations, which may increase the benefit to the growth population.

**Table 31: Benefit Apportionment Calculation**

| <b>Service</b>                             | <b>Benefit to Existing</b> | <b>In-Period Benefit to Growth</b> | <b>Post Period Benefit to Growth</b> |
|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Urban Mini-Bus                             | 76.3%                      | 21.1%                              | 2.6%                                 |
| Regional Mini-Bus                          | 79.4%                      | 18.6%                              | 2.0%                                 |
| Transit Stops and Shelters                 | 76.3%                      | 21.1%                              | 2.6%                                 |
| Transit Terminal (Study and Constructions) | 78.9%                      | 18.8%                              | 2.3%                                 |
| Transit Study                              | 78.9%                      | 18.8%                              | 2.3%                                 |

## Governance

The implementation of a transit service in Centre Wellington requires a decision on the governance model (who makes decisions on planning, funding and operation of the service). Currently, there are three transit services that operate within the Township, each governed by a different municipality. **Table 32** below outlines each of the existing and recommended transit services, including which jurisdiction is or should be responsible for the service.

**Table 32: Service Delivery Ownership of Transit Services**

| Service                                             | Service Area                                   | Status   | Responsibility (Governance)                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| Fergus-Elora Visitor Shuttle                        | Fergus and Elora                               | Existing | Township of Centre Wellington                             |
| On-Demand Transit                                   | Fergus, Elora, Salem                           | Existing | County of Wellington                                      |
| Specialized Transit                                 | Wellington County                              | Existing | Township of Centre Wellington                             |
| Guelph Owen Sound Transit                           | Mount Forest, Arthur, Fergus, Elora and Guelph | Existing | Grey County, with potential addition of Wellington County |
| Urban Fixed-Route Transit                           | Fergus, Elora, Salem                           | Proposed | Township of Centre Wellington                             |
| Dedicated Specialized Transit for Centre Wellington | Centre Wellington                              | Proposed | Centre Wellington and County of Wellington                |
| Regional Transit (Fergus to Guelph)                 | Fergus to Guelph                               | Proposed | County of Wellington and Township of Centre Wellington    |

As seen above, there are a mix of existing and potential operators, with both the County and the Township having interest and recommended responsibility over different parts of the service. To be successful, it will be important to ensure different aspects of the service are integrated to enhance the passenger experience and identify opportunities to create efficiencies and maximize provincial and federal funding.

There are three governance options that the Township can consider:

- **Municipal Transit:** Under this model, Centre Wellington would operate the local urban conventional service. The County's RIDE WELL service would continue to operate in the rural areas, but the Township would pay the cost difference to use an accessible vehicle to create a specialized transit service. The regional service would likely be the responsibility of the County, however, would have a greater focus on the entire corridor from Mount Forest to Guelph, which may result in less targeted trips from Fergus/Elora to Guelph.
- **Shared-Service Delivery:** Under this model, the Township would enter into an agreement with the County to operate the local urban and specialized service using the same operator(s) and on-demand technology provider. The Township would decide on the transit plan including the level of service within the urban area and set budgets. The County would do the same for RIDE WELL and the regional service. With one common operator, the service would be delivered as one integrated system.
- **County-wide Transit:** Under this model, the Township would upload responsibility of the transit service to the County, including funding the of the service through the County tax levy. This provides the benefit of centralizing decision-making, service, and maintenance for all transit under the County. This structure creates a high level of integration and allows the County to make decisions that benefit the entire region, not just individual municipalities.

Based on the above three options, it is recommended that the Township propose a shared service delivery model with the County in the short-term. A shared-service model has the potential to create efficiencies by sharing resources and enhancing coordination opportunities so that passengers can seamlessly transfer between RIDE WELL, the proposed regional service and the urban service within Centre Wellington. It would also allow both the Township and the County to maximize gas tax funding by ensuring the gas tax contribution does not exceed 75% of the municipal contribution. Finally, it provides a stronger case to apply for OTIF funding, as there would be greater coordination and integration between services, which is a requirement of OTIF.

In this model, an agreement would need to be established that confirms common elements of the service (e.g. branding, technology provider, fare structure, etc.) to create a seamless network. This same agreement would need to identify that the

Township would still be able to give direction over the local route structure and level of service and approve budgets annually.

The cost to manage the service would also be consolidated. The County has received budget approval to hire a full-time transit coordinator to plan and manage the RIDE WELL and the potential regional service (planning, contract management, customer service, etc.). Adding the urban transit service in Centre Wellington could be taken on by this individual, with the addition of a part-time or full-time transit technician to focus on customer inquiries and data analysis of the entire system.

From a costing perspective, the County would continue to be responsible for and fund the RIDE WELL service in the rural area as well as the regional service. The Township would be responsible for the urban service as well as the specialized transit service.

## 14.0

## Implementation Plan

The following steps should be taken to implement and operate the transit service.

## 14.1

### Pre-Launch

1. Develop a functional design of the downtown Fergus transit terminal, including potential costs. The conceptual design should identify a short-term solution that will allow the Phase 1 system to operate in the short-term with minimal construction costs, and a more comprehensive design to be introduced along side Phase 2.
2. Approach Wellington County and begin discussions about a governance strategy and shared service agreement that is integrated with RIDE WELL and the proposed regional service. This should include discussions about combining provincial gas tax funding and a future application for the Ontario Transit Investment Fund.
3. Identify and/or hire an individual to take on the role of Transit Coordinator. If an agreement is in place to move towards a shared-service model or upload transit services to the County, the planned position approved by the County could be used, with the potential of hiring a transit technician to support this function. This may also require outside consulting services to assist staff with implementation.
4. Prepare an amendment to the Township's Development Charges Background Study and By-law to include growth-related transit capital costs.
5. Apply for funding from the Federal or Provincial Government for any capital requirements (e.g. shelters, stops, fleet), software or consulting services required to implement the plan (e.g. the Rural Transit Solutions Fund and the Ontario Transit Investment Fund).
6. Confirm the fare structure and identify fare payment platforms (e.g. cash, electronic, etc.). Work with Social Services to implement criteria for income-based fare discounts.
7. Confirm location of bus stops on Phase 1 routes and identify those that should move forward with accessible concrete pads.
8. Develop service parameters and identify key performance indicators to be included in a contract with a private contractor.
9. Develop eligibility criteria and application process for specialized transit service, utilizing the eligibility developed by the County for RIDE WELL as a starting point.

10. Work with the County to transition the RIDE WELL service that is dedicated to Centre Wellington to an accessible vehicle. This would require moving away from the existing operator and to the operator that is currently operating RIDE WELL's accessible service.
11. Upon securing sufficient funding for the Phase 1 service, issue a Request For Proposals (RFP) to retain a service operator to operate the service over a 2 to 3 year pilot. This can be included as part of the service operator contract.
12. Refine schedule for the regional transit service based on ideal pick-up and drop-off times at key destinations, coordinated with the existing GOST service.
13. Initiate discussions Metrolinx regarding opportunities with PRESTO 2.0 and OneFare program.
14. Initiate discussions with the City of Guelph regarding a potential stop near Smart Centres North and at the Guelph Transit downtown terminal.

## 14.2 Service Launch

1. Identify a name and brand for the transit service, including logo and colour scheme.
2. Develop webpage that provides information on the transit service, including a web-based platform to allow residents and visitors to book rides on the RIDE WELL platform and with links to the GOST service.
3. Promote the service using various media outlets and social media channels. Make this a 'soft launch' at first to ensure there is enough capacity in the system to accommodate ridership demand.
4. Begin discussions with community organizations and employers to identify opportunities for them to purchase full or discounted fares for their clients.
5. Monitor the performance of the service and adjust the schedule, hours of service and need for additional vehicles based on established KPIs.
6. Adjust service as required, implement next phases of the plan
7. Initiate a Transit Master Plan in Year 3 or 4 of the service.

## Appendix A

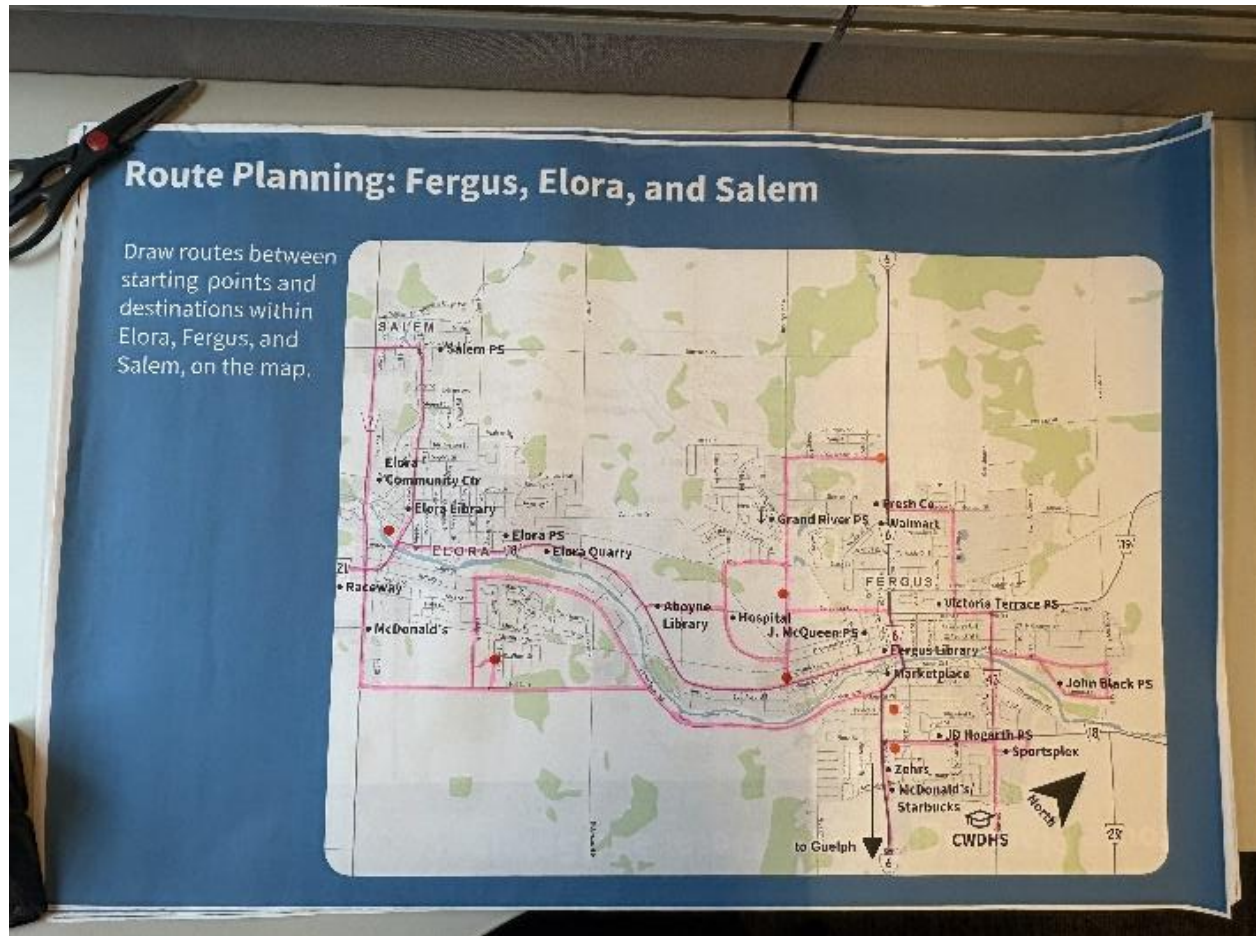
### Round 1 Engagement Activities

The project team hosted a dedicated engagement session with students at Centre Wellington District High School (CWDHS) on October 22nd, 2025. This session included a presentation on the fundamentals of transit planning followed by an interactive route-mapping workshop. Students worked in groups to identify common travel destinations and draw potential transit routes that would best serve the youth demographic in Elora, Fergus, and Salem. **Figures A-1 and A-2** below illustrate some of the routes and key destinations that were identified by the high school students.

**Figure A-1: Destinations**



Figure A-2: Routes



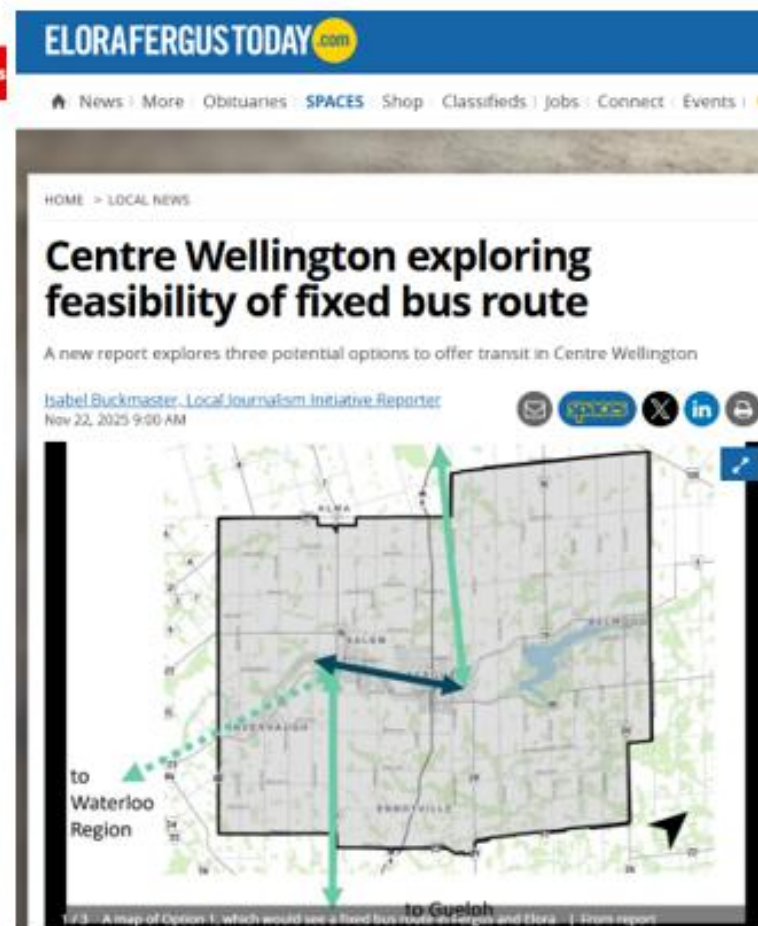
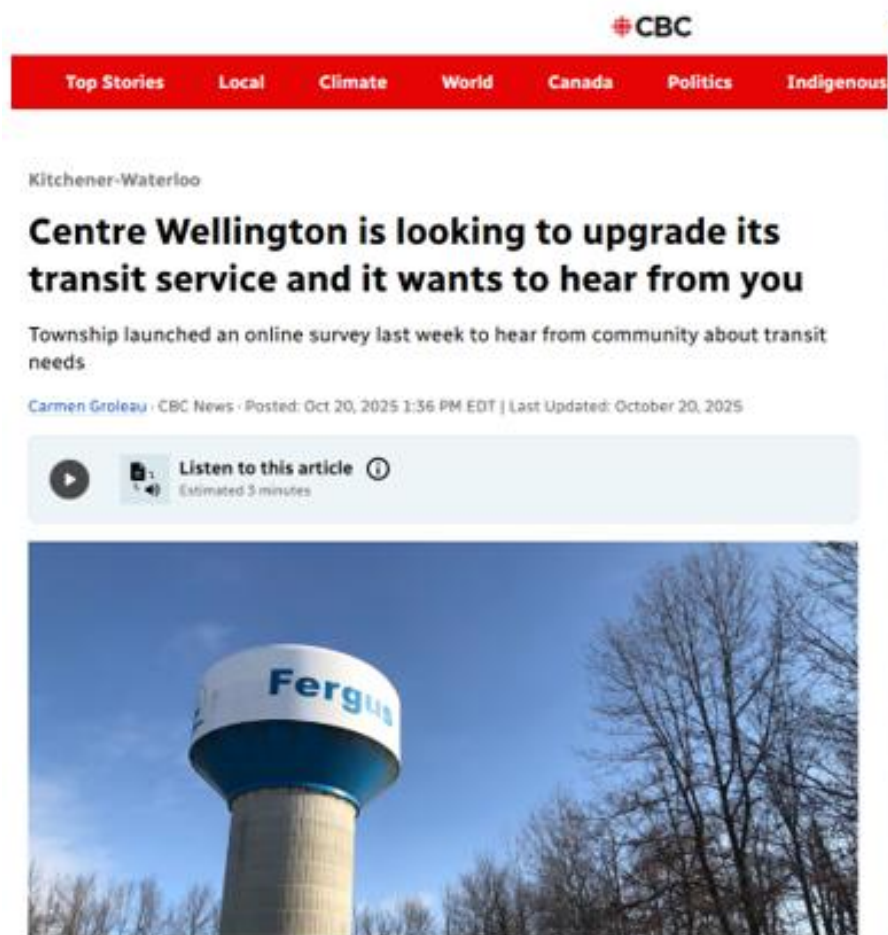
To promote the public engagement activities, publicity methods such as posters were prepared, and social media posts were made to reach a wide audience. Below is an image of the poster that was distributed throughout the Township.

Figure A-3: Poster



The project was featured in news articles from both local and regional outlets, including EloraFergusToday and CBC News, to inform the public about the ongoing Transit Feasibility Study. These articles described the study's objective to assess the viability of a fixed-route transit system and invited residents to participate in the public surveys.

Figure A-4: News Articles



## Appendix B

### Capital Plan Project Sheets

The following section identifies project fact sheets that provide a higher level of detail for capital requirements in the plan.

### Multi-Modal Transit Hub

| Section         | Content Details                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Project ID      | TT-01 - Multi-Modal Transit Terminal                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Location        | Near the municipal parking lot at Provost Lane and St. Patrick Street West                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Scope of Design | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accommodate 6 saw-tooth bays and one space for a RIDE WELL vehicle with a centre platform for passengers</li> <li>• Bays should accommodate a 9 metre vehicle, with the potential to expand to a 12-metre vehicle in the future</li> <li>• Include 2 shelters, benches, waste receptacles and a bike rack within the platform</li> <li>• Platform should include room to accommodate bus stop signs at each bus bay, with information about the network</li> <li>• Provide adequate lighting</li> <li>• Sufficient electrical capacity should be in place for lighting and potential electronic messaging boards</li> </ul> |
| AODA Features   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passenger platform must be curb-height with the opportunity to accommodate low-floor buses</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| MCEA Schedule   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Likely Schedule B (Requires public/agency consultation due to land use).</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Cost            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Between \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 (to be confirmed with functional design)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

## Bus Stop and Pad

| Section         | Content Details                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Location        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locate far side of signalized or stop-control intersections</li> <li>• Spacing between 300 to 400 metres apart</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Scope of Design | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mounted on post</li> <li>• Unobstructed paved surface</li> <li>• Bus stop sign (include name of transit service, route number, symbol for accessibility). Potential to add phone number to get information on next-bus arrival.</li> <li>• Some bus stops to include a shelter with a bench</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| AODA Features   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A bus stop sign mounted in a conspicuous location.</li> <li>• An unobstructed hard surface or concrete pad to permit wheelchair boarding and sidewalk access (at least two metres deep from the curb, and at least 1.5 metres wide).</li> <li>• Barrier-free connections to the nearest sidewalk or a ramp to street level in locations where sidewalks are not available.</li> <li>• Shelters should be at least 1.75 metres wide by 3.5 metres long, facing an accessible concrete pad.</li> </ul> |
| MCEA Schedule   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not accessible</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Cost            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bus Stop Sign: \$500</li> <li>• Bus Stop Pad: \$3,000</li> <li>• Shelter: \$10,000</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

## Transit Bus

| Section       | Content Details                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Scope         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Procurement of small-to-mid-sized transit vehicles for fixed-route service.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Vehicle Specs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capacity: 20 seated passengers (plus 2 wheelchair positions).</li> <li>Chassis: Commercial cutaway (e.g., Ford E-Series or similar class).</li> </ul>                                                                                                                             |
| AODA Features | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fully low-floor design OR high-floor equipped with a rear/side power ramp; securement systems (Q'Straint or similar style); high-color-contrast stanchions; and automated stop announcement and display capability.</li> <li>Electronic Fare Box installed on vehicle.</li> </ul> |
| MCEA Schedule | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not accessible</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Cost          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>\$250,000 to \$350,000 per vehicle</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |