



To: COUNCIL

Meeting Date: 12/3/2024

Subject: Cambridge to Union Passenger Rail Connection – Support for Initial Business Case

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Report No.: 24-138-CD

File No.: C11

Wards Affected: All Wards

RECOMMENDATION(S):

THAT Report 24-138-CD, Cambridge to Union Passenger Rail Connection – Support for Initial Business Case be received;

AND THAT Council endorse the findings of the Cambridge to Union Passenger Rail Connection Initial Business Case and Concept Design study;

AND FURTHER THAT staff be directed to forward a letter of support on behalf of Council to the Region of Waterloo to create a unified voice to advocate for the project.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Purpose

To obtain Council endorsement of the Cambridge Passenger Rail Initial Business Case and Concept Design study (the Study), that considered providing passenger rail service along the Canadian National (CN) Railway Fergus Subdivision through Guelph Central Station and obtain direction to provide a letter of support for the project.

Key Findings

The results of the Study indicate that the project should proceed to the next level as it has a strong planning rationale, a reasonable cost, benefits that exceed those costs, and it can be delivered with reasonable certainty.

A letter of support from Cambridge Council will assist Regional staff in pursuing the next steps on this project.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications to providing a letter of support.

It is still premature to determine which organization, or entities will be responsible for capital costs of such a project.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT:

Strategic Action

Objective(s): GETTING AROUND - Emphasize connectivity and active transportation choices to help people travel in and beyond the city without a car

Strategic Action: Promote and develop more transportation options

OR

Core Service

Program: Not Applicable

Core Service: Not Applicable

The completion of the Cambridge-to-Toronto (Union Station) GO Rail Feasibility Study via the Fergus Subdivision demonstrates the commitment of Municipal, Regional and Provincial partners to coordinate the planning and integration of transportation by rail.

BACKGROUND:

In August 2024, Region of Waterloo report TSD-TRP-24-012, Cambridge to Union Passenger Rail Connection Initial Business Case and Concept Design Update, was presented to the Region of Waterloo Sustainability, Infrastructure and Development Committee and approved by Region of Waterloo Council. A copy of the Region staff report and Initial Business Case can be viewed on the Region of Waterloo Sustainability, Infrastructure and Development Committee agenda (Item 7.3.2) using this link [Report TSD-TRP-24-012](#). The report has been provided to Council under separate cover.

The report summarizes the final results of the Cambridge Passenger Rail Initial Business Case (IBC) and Concept Design study, that considered providing passenger

rail service along the Canadian National (CN) Railway Fergus Subdivision through Guelph Central Station and obtained approval for the next steps of the project.

Regional staff presented the IBC to Cambridge Council on May 14, 2024, a link to the presentation can be found here: [Cambridge to Union Passenger Rail Connection Presentation](#). The presentation has also been provided to Council under separate cover.

ANALYSIS:

The IBC has established a strong case for rail and bus service because the corridor is the largest un-served commuter movement outside of the GTA. The results of this Study indicate that the project should proceed to the next level as it has a strong planning rationale, a reasonable cost, benefits that exceed those costs, and it can be delivered with reasonable certainty.

The IBC report recommends that the Region of Waterloo take the following action:

1. Endorse the findings of the Cambridge to Union Passenger Rail Connection Initial Business Case and Concept Design study
2. Direct Regional staff to forward the Council report to Area Municipal partners to create a unified voice to support the project
3. Forward a request to Metrolinx to:
 - a) Include the project in the Regional Transit Plan;
 - b) Continue the project under Metrolinx' jurisdiction to further design and engineering to conduct a Preliminary Design Business Case, and to continue engagement with CN to establish a strategy for use of the Fergus Subdivision; and
 - c) Provide GO bus service between Cambridge and Guelph to meet current needs prior to the proposed rail service being operational

To demonstrate a unified voice to support the project, a letter of support for the project from Cambridge council is being requested by Regional staff and recommended by City staff. A draft letter of support for the project has been included in **Appendix A**.

EXISTING POLICY / BY-LAW(S):

The City's 2018 Consolidated Official Plan includes the following policies regarding GO Transit:

Policy 6.10 Public Transit

1. The City supports a coordinated, multi-modal approach to transportation, which includes a strong public transit system. To this end the City will work with the Region, the Province and other partners to plan, improve and promote the public transit system as an alternative form of transportation within the city. Rapid transit service in Cambridge will operate in mixed traffic or on an exclusive right-of-way on an arterial road or Provincial highway. In addition, the City supports the addition of effective intermunicipal transit links including the extension of GO Transit services to Cambridge.

Policy 6.13 Railways

2. The City encourages the provision and expansion of scheduled passenger rail service, including GO Transit service to Cambridge. The City may take actions required to encourage and implement the expansion of passenger rail service, including supporting facilities and services without amending this Plan.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The IBC study outlines a key opportunity to plan a Transit-Oriented Community around the proposed Pinebush Station that would allow for a diverse range of housing options by focusing on higher density and mixed-use development for potential employment opportunities. This type of planning may add substantial economic benefits to the project and uncover avenues to significantly offset capital costs. It is still premature to determine which organization or entities will be responsible for capital costs of such a project.

PUBLIC VALUE:

Sustainability:

Council support for this project promotes sustainability by providing a car alternative through the expansion of an equitable public transportation network for people to get around and make climate-friendly choices.

Collaboration:

This project demonstrates the City's commitment to actively working together with our Regional, Municipal and Provincial partners to achieve common goals and represent community interests.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE INPUT:

Advisory Committees Consulted:

Not Applicable.

PUBLIC INPUT:

Posted publicly as part of the report process.

INTERNAL / EXTERNAL CONSULTATION:

There was no internal/external consultation undertaken.

CONCLUSION:

Based on the above, it is recommended that Council endorse the findings of the Cambridge to Union Passenger Rail Connection Initial Business Case and Concept Design study and provide a letter of support for the project from Cambridge council. Council support for this project not only promotes sustainability, but also creates a unified voice to advocate for the project.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: **No**

By-law: **No**

Budget Amendment: **No**

Policy: **No**

APPROVALS:

This report has gone through the appropriate workflow and has been reviewed and or approved by the following as required:

Director

Deputy City Manager

Chief Financial Officer

City Solicitor

City Manager

ATTACHMENTS:

1. 24-138-CD Appendix A – Draft Letter of Support

