

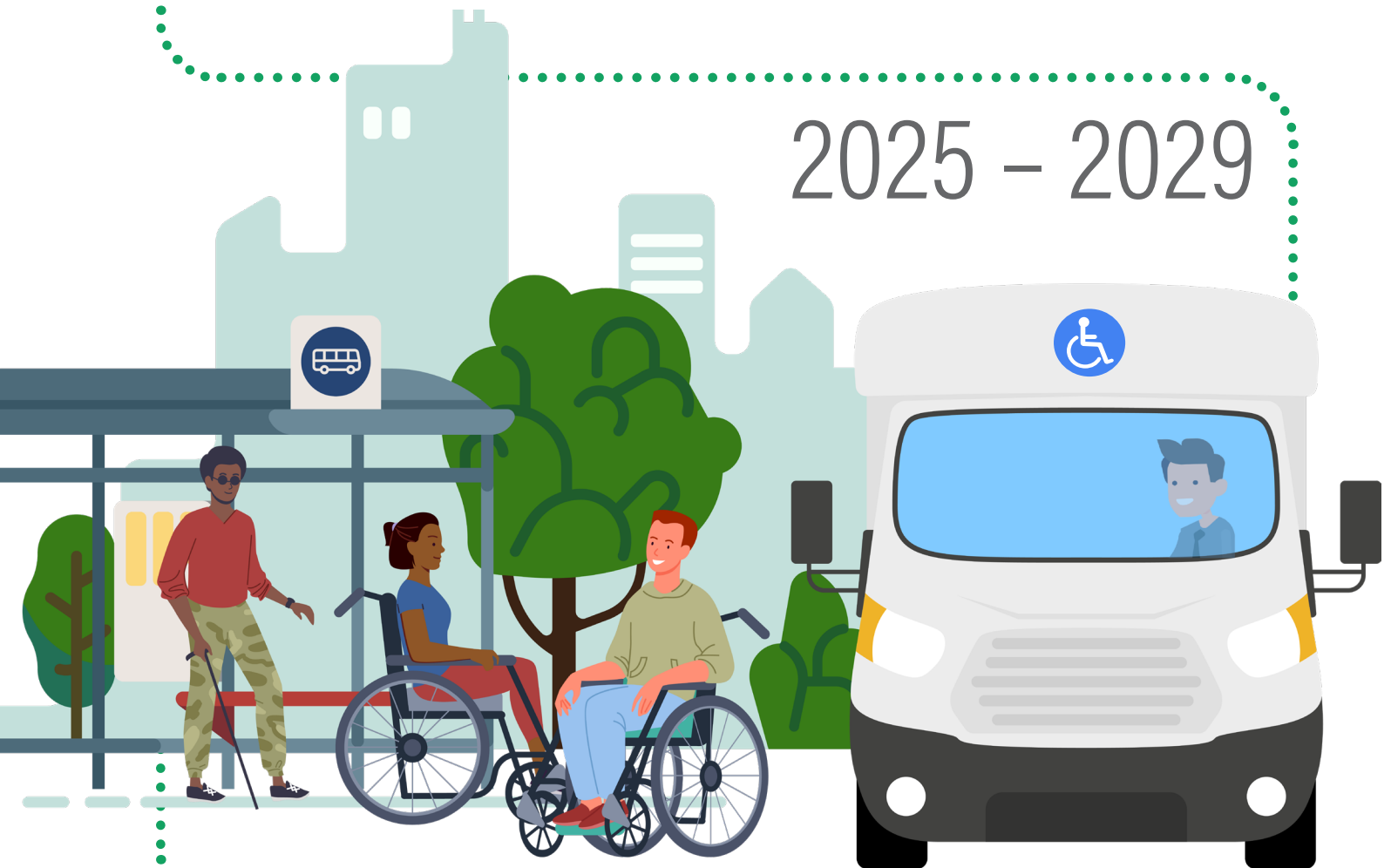


LONDON TRANSIT COMMISSION

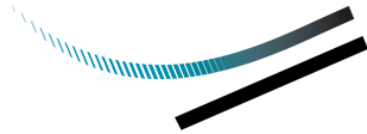


# LONDON TRANSIT Specialized Transit Service Plan

2025 – 2029



June 2024



**DILLON**  
CONSULTING

LONDON TRANSIT COMMISSION

# **Five Year Specialized Transit Service Plan (2025-2029)**

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# Introduction

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Dillon Consulting Limited (Dillon) was retained to develop a Five-Year Specialized Transit Service Plan for London Transit. The plan will be used to guide service and policy changes for London's Specialized Transit service between 2025 and 2029.

The purpose of this study is to:

- Assess the existing Specialized Transit service against the key performance indicators, best practices and input from the Voice of the Customer survey and the London Accessibility Advisory Committee;
- Identify key concerns with the existing service as well as opportunities to enhance the service over the next four years;
- Identify policy, procedure and service improvements to enhance current performance and balance passenger, operations and financial needs; and
- Confirm annual service hour requirements and fleet expansion requirements over the next five years.

## 2.0 Specialized Transit Assessment

London Specialized Transit is a door-to-door, demand-responsive service for eligible persons with disabilities who cannot use conventional transit service due to a disability or otherwise the inability to travel independently. London residents who require this service must apply through an application process detailed in **Section 2.3** below. In 2023, Specialized Transit provided over 220,000 trips to over 13,000 registered clients, with a fleet of 50 vehicles.

### 2.1 Types of Accessible Services

LTC provides the following types of accessible services:

- **Specialized Transit:** A shared-ride, door-to-door service utilizing two types of accessible vehicles (life-equipped and converted mini-van with ramp) for Specialized Transit registrants (and their attendants and companions) who are unable to use conventional transit due to the nature of their disability. The service is operated in accordance with Policies and Procedures Manual of Specialized Transit Services.
- **Workshop Shuttles (suspended):** Dedicated service circulating to pick up passengers requiring a higher level of service to/from locations such as sheltered workshops. It should be noted that these shuttles were suspended during COVID-19 due to program cancellations which have not resumed, and as such, the shuttles have not been reintroduced.

In addition to the above, London Transit also offers various other services and programs that may provide more travel options for certain registered Specialized Transit customers. These include:

- **Community Bus:** Community Bus are accessible fixed-route services that connect various community origins and destinations or interest to seniors, such as seniors' homes, community centers, grocery stores, shopping plazas and medical clinics. The routes are designed to minimize the walk/roll distance from key destinations and the bus stop, making them more suitable for persons with mobility challenges. These routes are widely used by seniors and registered Specialized Transit customers.
- **Accessible Fixed-Route Services:** All of London's fixed-route transit fleet is 100% fully accessible. The City has also been focused on making more bus stops accessible, including having a concrete landing pad with a connection to a sidewalk. Some Specialized Transit customers can use accessible fixed-route services, depending on the route, their origin and destination and the nature of their disability.

### 2.2 Operations and Ridership

Specialized Transit in London is contracted to a private transportation operator. The contractor provides and maintains the vehicles and operators while LTC is responsible for reviewing applications, booking, scheduling and dispatching rides and setting policy and procedures, and maintaining service-related data.

The service is provided using a fleet of 50 vehicles, 40 of which are lift-equipped with a capacity of ten ambulatory seats and six wheelchair spots for non-ambulatory passengers, and 10 of which are ProMaster vans which are equipped with a ramp. Peak demand is typically during mornings and late afternoons on weekdays between 8:00 am and 6:00 pm, when all 50 vehicles are in operation.

**Table 1** presents a summary of the operating and financial statistics for London Specialized Transit from 2019 to 2023.

**Table 1: London Specialized Transit Statistics from 2019-2023**

Indicators	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Service Area Population	377,500	377,500	418,800	418,800	418,800
Registrants	10,690	11,025	10,877	11,989	13,029
Annual Ridership (excluding Support Person)	298,564	143,726	157,789	208,946	223,300
Ridership per Registrant	27.9	13.0	14.5	17.4	17.1
Revenue Vehicle Hours	147,100	129,885	122,200	119,055	133,911
Ridership per Revenue Vehicle Hour	2.0	1.1	1.3	1.8	1.7
Revenue Vehicle Hour per Registrant	13.8	11.8	11.2	9.9	10.3
Passenger Revenue	\$570,652	\$265,596	\$333,328	\$428,298	\$496,291
Total Direct Operating Expense	\$9,193,409	\$8,690,679	\$8,993,115	\$9,370,738	\$10,289,912
Net Direct Operating Expense	\$8,622,757	\$8,425,083	\$8,659,787	\$8,942,440	\$9,793,621
Direct Operating Cost per Ridership	\$30.8	\$60.5	\$57.0	\$44.8	\$46.1
Direct Operating Cost per Revenue Vehicle Hour	\$62.5	\$66.9	\$73.6	\$78.7	\$76.8
Revenue to Cost Ratio	6.2%	3.1%	3.7%	4.6%	4.8%

### 2.2.1

#### Registrants and Ridership

As illustrated in **Table 1**, while the number of registrants between 2019 and 2023 grew by 22%, there was a 25% drop in ridership (or 39% drop in trips per registrant). This was due to an increased number of individuals that registered for Specialized Transit during the COVID-19 pandemic and a decrease in number of rides due to stay at home orders and need for social distancing during this same period. LTC has also noted that approximately 8,000 registrants (60%) did not use Specialized Transit in 2023 and are considered inactive. LTC is currently in the process of reviewing these registrants and will remove registrants that no longer use the service from the database.

As the vehicles required to increase service levels in 2023 were not available until the latter part of the year, budgeted service levels were not reached until December of 2023. These service levels will remain in place for 2024 and will be further enhanced with the approved growth hours for 2024 as vehicles are made available. As such, it is anticipated that ridership on the service will increase significantly in 2024.



### 2.2.2 Amount of Service

The amount of service is reflected in the revenue vehicle hours provided. **Table 1** illustrates a decrease in revenue vehicle hours between 2019 and 2023, due in large part to the decrease in demand during the COVID-19 pandemic. London Transit has been working with the contractor to get the required vehicles in place to increase service hours to meet those budgeted however, industry-wide challenges with supply chain and operator recruitment over the past few years have slowed this down. In late 2023, all the additional 10 vehicles were placed into service, and daily service hours were increased to match those budgeted, as illustrated in **Figure 1** below.

### 2.2.3 Financial Performance

The financial performance of Specialized Transit was also affected by COVID-19. Passenger revenue decreased due to reduced ridership, while the hourly cost to operate the service increased due to rising inflation and decreased efficiency with fewer riders accessing the service. While the cost per hour reduced slightly in 2023, overall revenue to cost ratio has decreased since 2019, and is now at 77% of pre-COVID levels.

### 2.2.4 Operating Performance

**Figure 1** illustrates the percentage of non-accommodated Specialized Transit trips versus revenue vehicle hours in 2023. London Transit's performance target for non-accommodated in the previous plan was that no more than 2.7% of trips were non-accommodated. This is higher than the average performance of 1.43% identified by the CUTA Specialized Transit Services Industry Practices Review report for a medium-sized transit agency. Between February and June, 4 to 8% of trips were non-accommodated, which also reflected a lower amount of service availability. Non-accommodated trips decreased significantly in August 2023, and fell to between 2.5 and 3.5% between August and December, which is within or close to LTC's target. This coincided with the increase in revenue vehicle hours as the new vehicles were added to the service in the last few months of the year. Despite the decreasing trend, it is noted that the performance figure is still considered relatively high compared to industry-wide best practices.



**Figure 1: Percentage of Non-Accommodated Trips vs. Revenue Vehicle Hours in 2023**

**Figure 2** below shows the percentage of same day bookings in 2023. While passengers can book trips up to 3 days in advance, it is important that same-day trip requests can be accommodated to increase spontaneity and flexibility of travel for Specialized Transit customers. The ability to do this is based on the amount of service, the reduction in No-Shows and Late Cancellations and the ability for the software to book trips efficiency (with ridesharing). Same day booking statistics are maintained in an effort to ensure that travel spontaneity is maintained for the customer base.

As seen from the figure, while the percentage of same day trips varied throughout the year, the monthly average hovered at 11.6%.

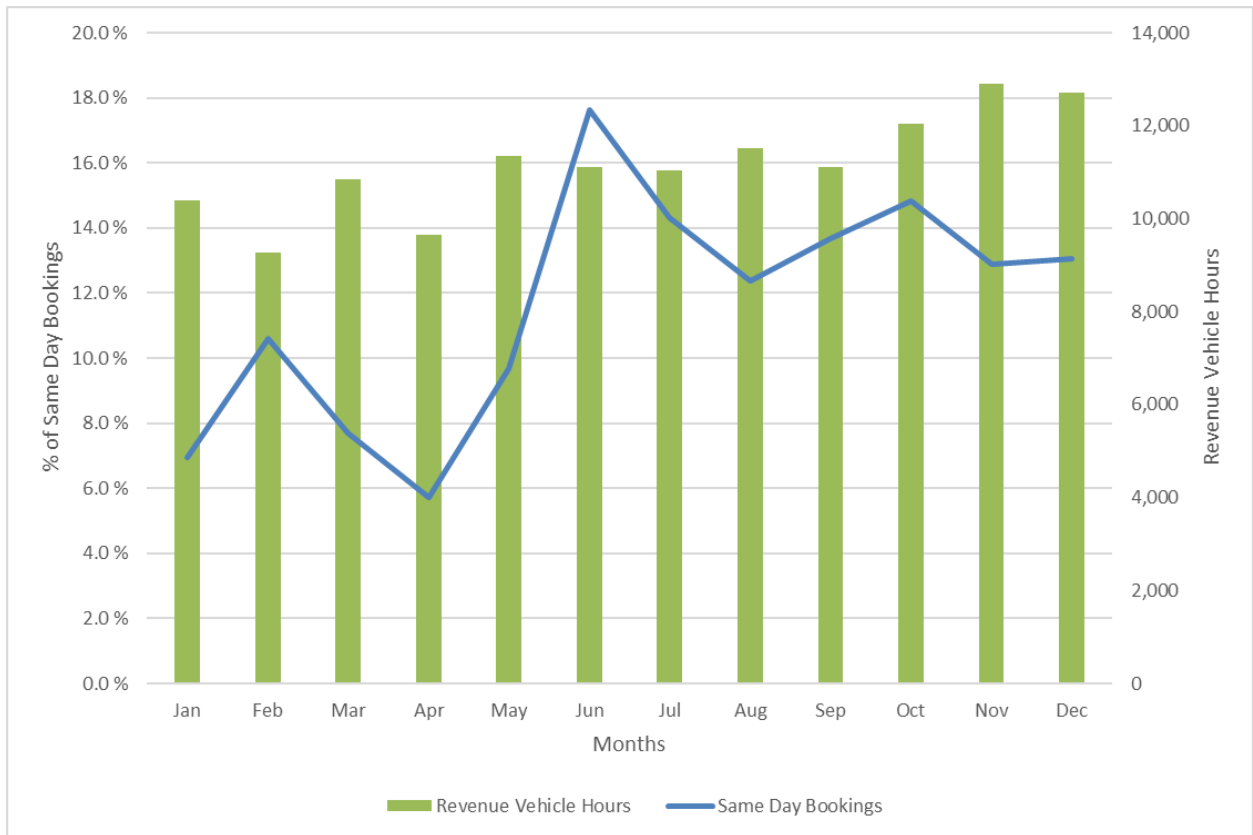


Figure 2: Percentage of Non-Accommodated Trips vs. Revenue Vehicle Hours in 2023

## 2.3 Service Eligibility and Ridership Profile

### 2.3.1 Demographics and Eligibility

Specialized Transit is available to London residents that are unable to use conventional transit for all of some of their trips as the result of a disability. In 2023, approximately 61% of registrants were ambulatory and 39% non-ambulatory (required the use of a mobility device). Eligibility for Specialized Transit is based on three categories:

- Unconditional - All trips require specialized services, i.e., for a permanent disability.
- Temporary - All trips require specialized services for a limited duration, i.e., for a temporary disability such as during recovery from a hip/knee surgery.
- Conditional - Trips taken by a person with disabilities who require specialized services under certain circumstances, such as with extreme weather or variable environmental barriers.

The eligibility categories are consistent with the requirements of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* and the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations (IASR)* (O. Reg. 191/11, S.63 (1)-(4)).

London Transit has not, to date, made use of the conditional category of eligibility for registrants, as such, with the exception of the 200-300 temporary registrants, all remaining registrants are considered unconditional at this time.

### 2.3.2 Application Form

The London Specialized Transit application form can be filled out by London residents that wish to use the service. The application form is easily accessible, and can be downloaded on LTC's website, be picked-up at London Transit's office locations or by calling London Transit and having it sent to you. To submit the application form, applicants can choose to send it through mail or drop off to the LTC Highbury office.

The form includes an applicant section, a self-evaluation section, and a healthcare professional section. The length of the current application form, at three pages, is well balanced as it minimizes the amount of effort required on behalf of the applicant while also ensuring the transit agency has enough information to make an eligibility determination.

While the application form is effective, there are opportunities to improve the form to provide improved clarity on the form, including:

- Providing more information on the LTC conventional system to illustrate how the transit system is accessible and easy to understand;
- Requesting additional information from the applicant's health care professional with regards to the applicant's capabilities. There are many questions that can be added and asked to help determine if the applicant be approved under the conditional eligibility category;
- Adding questions that assess the functional abilities related to neurodivergent disabilities, sensory disabilities and mental health disabilities;
- Providing information to a person's emergency contact or Power of Attorney (as applicable); and
- Applying more inclusive language by shifting away from outdated terminology such as "restrictions," "limited abilities," etc.

### 2.3.3 Appeal Process

LTC has an appeal process in place that can be used by applicants who disagree with a decision about the eligibility to use Specialized Transit service. An appeal can be filed if there is additional information provided that is not part of the initial applicant or assessment. The information would be reviewed by a contracted Occupational Therapist to decide on the eligibility appeal.

If the appellant is not satisfied with the result, the appeal would go to the London Transit Commission. It is noted that appeals rarely reach the Commission and it has not occurred for over 10 years. Revisions to the application process that provide more clarity on the functional ability to use conventional transit may lead to more applications being denied or applicants being provided conditional eligibility (instead of unconditional eligibility). This may result in an increase in the number

of appeals. The appeal process that is in place is considered within industry standards and no modifications are recommended. In 2023, there were no appeals.

### 2.3.4 Travel Training

Travel training is a service that is targeted to individuals that need help understanding how to use conventional transit. The service can be targeted to existing or prospective Specialized Transit passengers, as well as a wide range of audiences that have never used conventional transit, including seniors, students and newcomers.

Providing travel training can result in passengers eligible for Specialized Transit electing to use conventional transit for some, all or a portion of their trips, in order to take advantage of the increased likelihood of trip accommodation and mobility it provides. A generalized travel training program may also divert or postpone registration for Specialized Transit services.

There are several different types of travel training programs that can be deployed by a transit agency. These could include some or all of the following:

- Group sessions: Provide general information about how to use transit;
- Written materials, brochures and videos: Include trip planning guides and tips;
- Group training on a vehicle: Use of an out-of-service bus to practice boarding and alighting with or without a mobility aid;
- One-on-one on-street training: A travel trainer would accompany a passenger through a trip from origin to destination or for a portion of the trip; and
- Partnering with community organizations: A train-the-trainer approach where the transit agency would partner with an organization that serves persons with disabilities and seniors to support their clients with information and tools to provide transit training as part of their programs.

LTC provides a mobile app called MagnusCards containing travel training content. The mobile app is designed for individuals with autism or other cognitive special needs but can be helpful to anyone that wants to learn how to use London Transit, including individuals new to public transit, newcomers and seniors. The content provided include the followings:

- How to Ride Transit;
- Planning a Trip;
- Priority & Courtesy Seating;
- Purchasing Fares;
- Riding the Bus with Accessibility Devices;
- Safety & Getting Help;
- Staying Up-to-Date;
- Using a Smart Card; and
- Using Real-Time Bus Info.

While this training program provides needed assistance for individuals that want to learn how to use conventional transit, it is not actively promoted. Additional resources and more targeted programming would be required if London Transit wants to further encourage the use of conventional transit by persons with disabilities to improve trip spontaneity and freedom for persons able to access and use the accessible features of the conventional transit service.

While it is recognized that support agencies in London also provide forms of travel training to their specific customer base, consideration should be given to a more defined program which would be developed by London Transit. Decisions could then be made with respect to the manner in which the training would be delivered (directly via LTC or through third-party partners).

## 2.4 Trip Booking and Delivery

### 2.4.1 Trip Booking

London's Specialized Transit service can be booked for any purpose up to three days in advance of the requested pick-up time. Service is provided between 5:30 am and 1:00 am on weekdays and Saturdays, from 7:00 am to 12:00 am on Sundays, and from 8:00 am to 12:00 am on statutory holidays. This is the same hours of operation as conventional transit and is fully compliant with the Specialized Transportation Service Providers section of the IASR O. Reg. 191/11.

Trips are booked on a first come, first served basis, based on the availability of the service to accommodate the trip. Registered customers are advised that they will be more likely to secure a trip if they scheduled their personal trips in non-peak hours (10:00 am to 2:30 pm or after 6:00 pm) to avoid the busy weekday schedule in the mornings and late afternoons.

Registered customers can book, change, or cancel a trip through the following ways:

- **Specialized Transit Booking and Cancellations Line:** Registered customers can call in during the following hours of operation to book or cancel a trip. They can also leave a message outside the operation hours to cancel a trip:
  - Weekdays: 7:00 am to 9:00 pm;
  - Saturday: 8:00 am to 9:00 pm; and
  - Sundays & Statutory Holidays: 8:00 am to 7:00 pm.
- **Self Service Option:** Passengers can check, or cancel bookings on the Amble Mobile App, dedicated webpage, or through the automated phone system.

Apart from the registrant themselves, bookings can be made, altered, or canceled by a third party with the provision of a registrant's client number.

Registrants traveling on a regular predetermined basis to or from a destination can request a subscription booking by calling the booking and cancellations line. This applies to regular and repeating travel for work, education, and medical purposes. In addition, one subscription booking can be made for personal purposes. These subscription bookings are subject to the limit of vehicle space available and

are not guaranteed. Any subscription bookings that fall on a statutory holiday will be considered canceled unless otherwise notified by the registrant.

The trip booking process is fully compliant with the entirety of the Specialized Transportation Service Providers section of the IASR O. Reg. 191/11, S.70-71.

It should be noted that London Transit is in the process of upgrading its trip booking and scheduling software. This will include an online booking platform, which will provide another trip booking option and reduce any excessive customer call wait time issues.

#### 2.4.2 Location Demand

Origin-destination (OD) data for Specialized Transit passengers was assessed using anonymized pick-up and drop-off data from 2023 to better understand where passengers are traveling. As only the raw destination addresses are listed, some addresses were grouped together to represent the following five most frequent destinations:

1. Victoria Hospital & Children's Hospital: 7,205 trips.
2. Community Living London (The Hub): 4,879 trips.
3. University Hospital - London Health Sciences Centre: 4,502 trips.
4. Cheshire Independent Living Services (South): 3,650 trips.
5. Westmount Shopping Centre/ Kidney Care Centre: 3,447 trips.

**Figure 3** shows a heatmap of the number of drop-offs using Specialized Transit in 2023. Specialized Transit drop-offs were focused on the downtown area, especially along Richmond Street and the area between Queens Avenue and York Street. Frequent drop-offs were also seen along Dundas Street between Highbury Avenue N and Clarke Road and Hamilton Road between Adelaide Street S and Egerton Street.



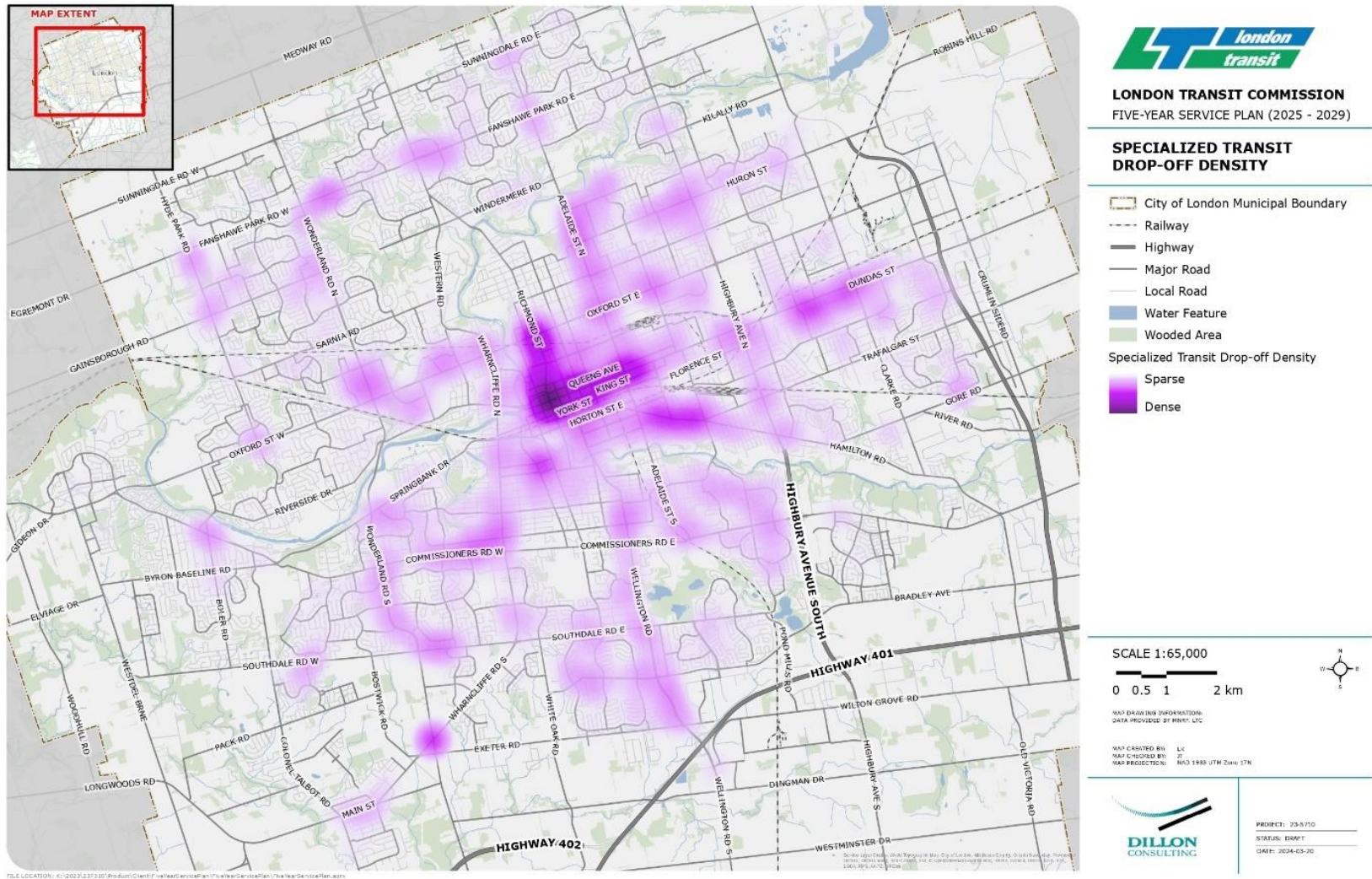
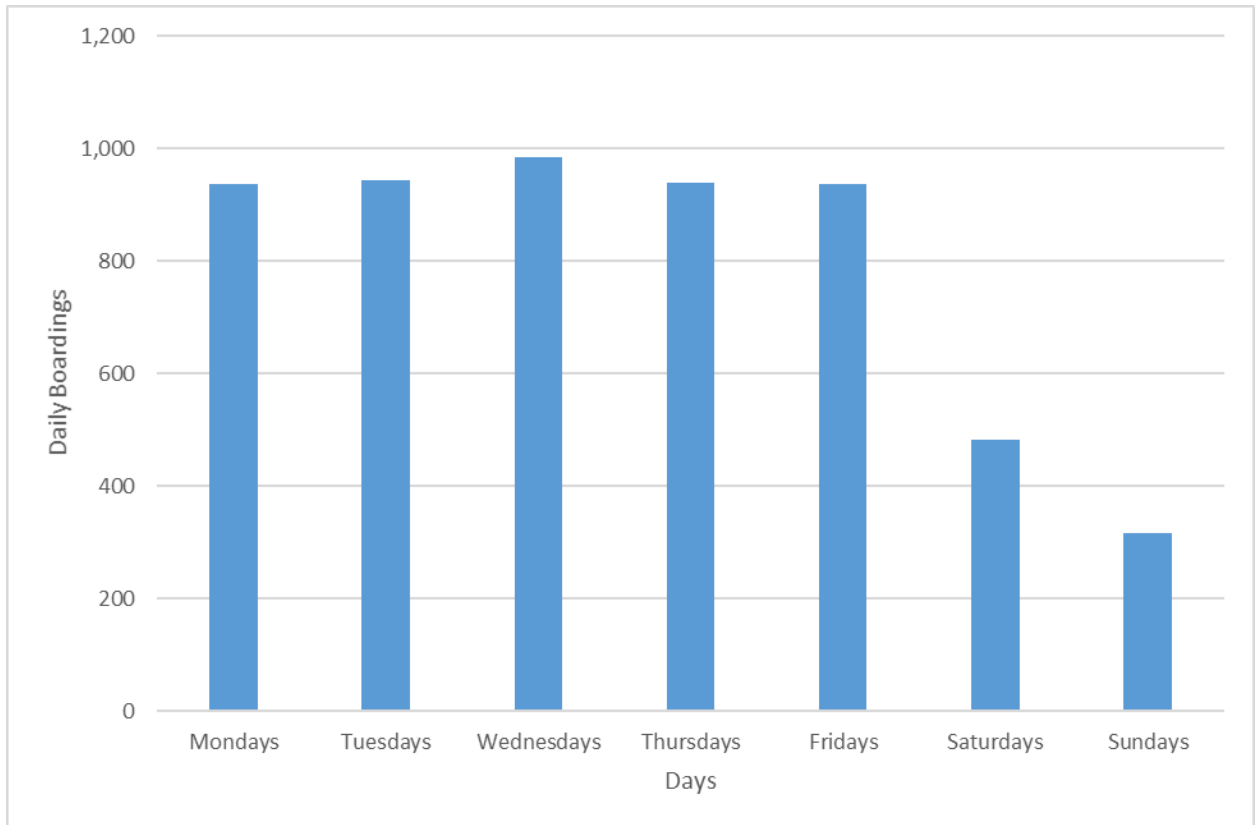


Figure 3: London Specialized Transit Drop-off Map



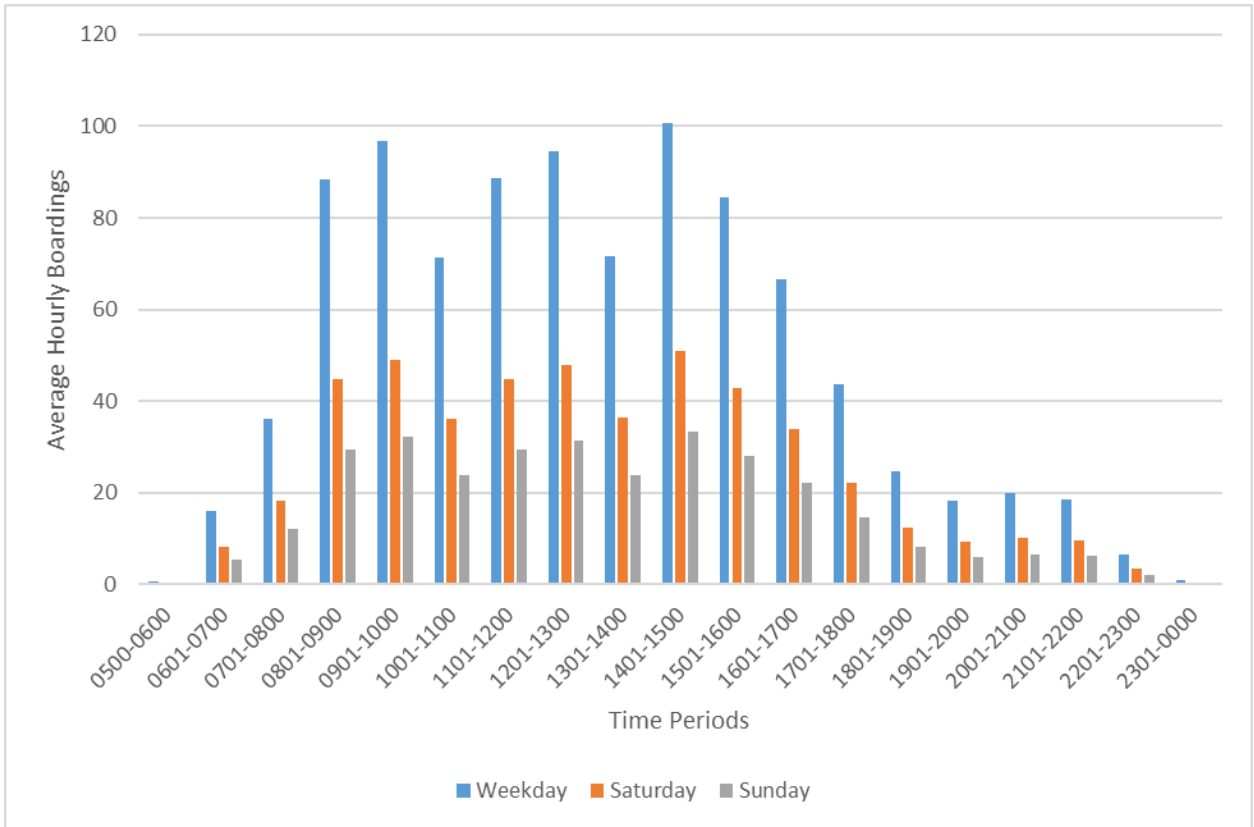
### 2.4.3 Boardings by Period

**Figure 4** below illustrates the passenger boardings per day based on ridership data in November 2023. Weekday trips are just over 900, with the highest ridership occurring on Wednesdays. Trips on Saturdays and Sundays averaged approximately 500 and 300 respectively.



**Figure 4: Average Daily Ridership by Day of Week in November 2023**

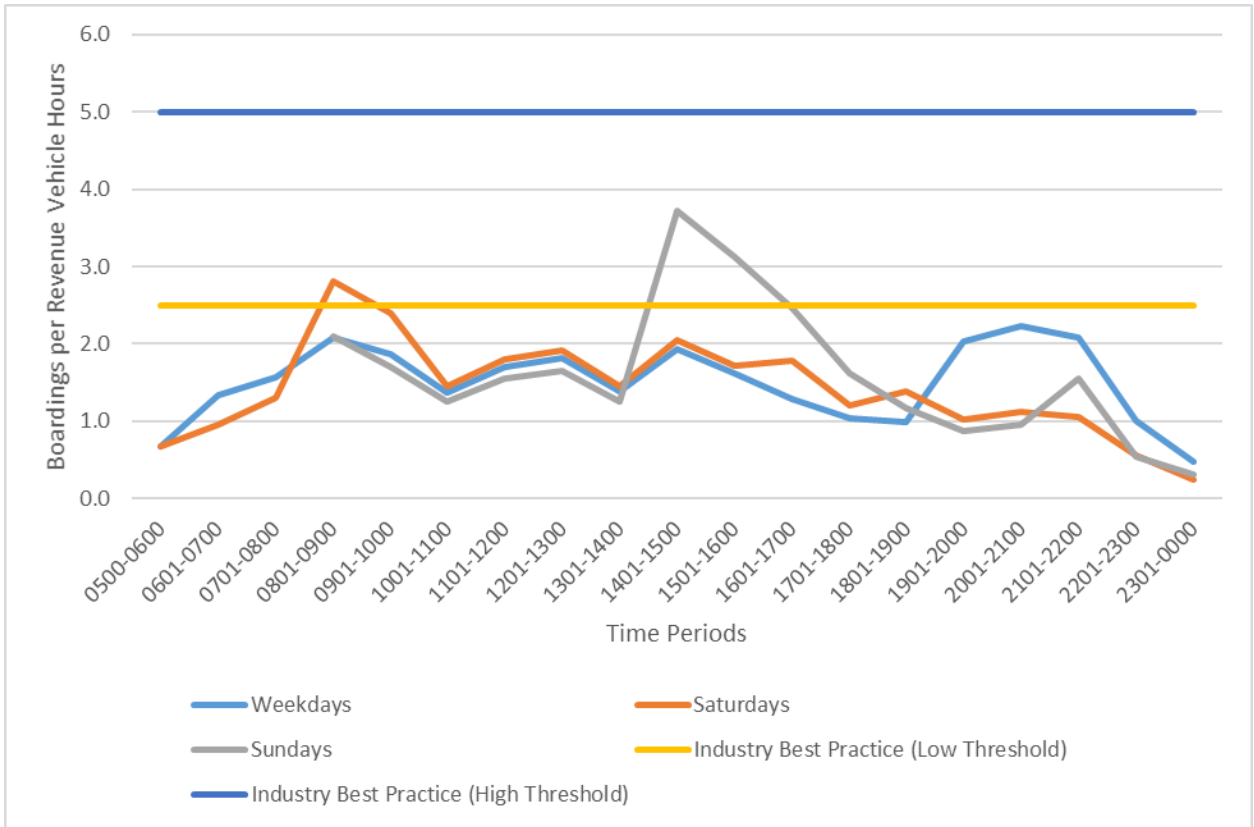
**Figure 5** illustrates the average passenger hourly boardings by time of day in November 2023. The peak weekday demand for service was focused between 8:00 am and 6:00 pm. During this period, service demand was slightly lower from 10:00 am – 11:00 am, 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm and declining sharply after 5:00pm. On Saturdays and Sundays, the peak service demand periods were consistent with the observations on weekdays.



**Figure 5: Average Hourly Boardings by Days of Week in November 2023**

The rides per hour were compared to the amount of service provided in each hour. This is illustrated in **Figure 6** below. The CUTA Specialized Transit Services Industry Practices Review report identified an industry best practice rate of trips per hour between 2.5 and 5.0. Productivity levels that fall within this range achieve a balance of efficient trip groupings and quality of service and customer satisfaction.

As illustrated below, rides per hour fell below the industry best practice threshold during all periods on weekdays, and during most periods on Saturdays and Sundays, with the exception of between 8:00 am and 9:00 am on Saturdays and between 2:00 pm and 3:00pm on Sundays. At no period did boardings per hour occur above the maximum threshold noted in the industry best practices. While these best practices are guidelines only and dependent on the size and characteristics of the service area, it does show that there is room to increase the productivity of the service, if non-accommodated trips can also fall within the maximum thresholds noted in **Section 2.2.4**.



**Figure 6: Passenger Boardings per Revenue Vehicle Hours by Time of Day & Day of Week in November 2023**

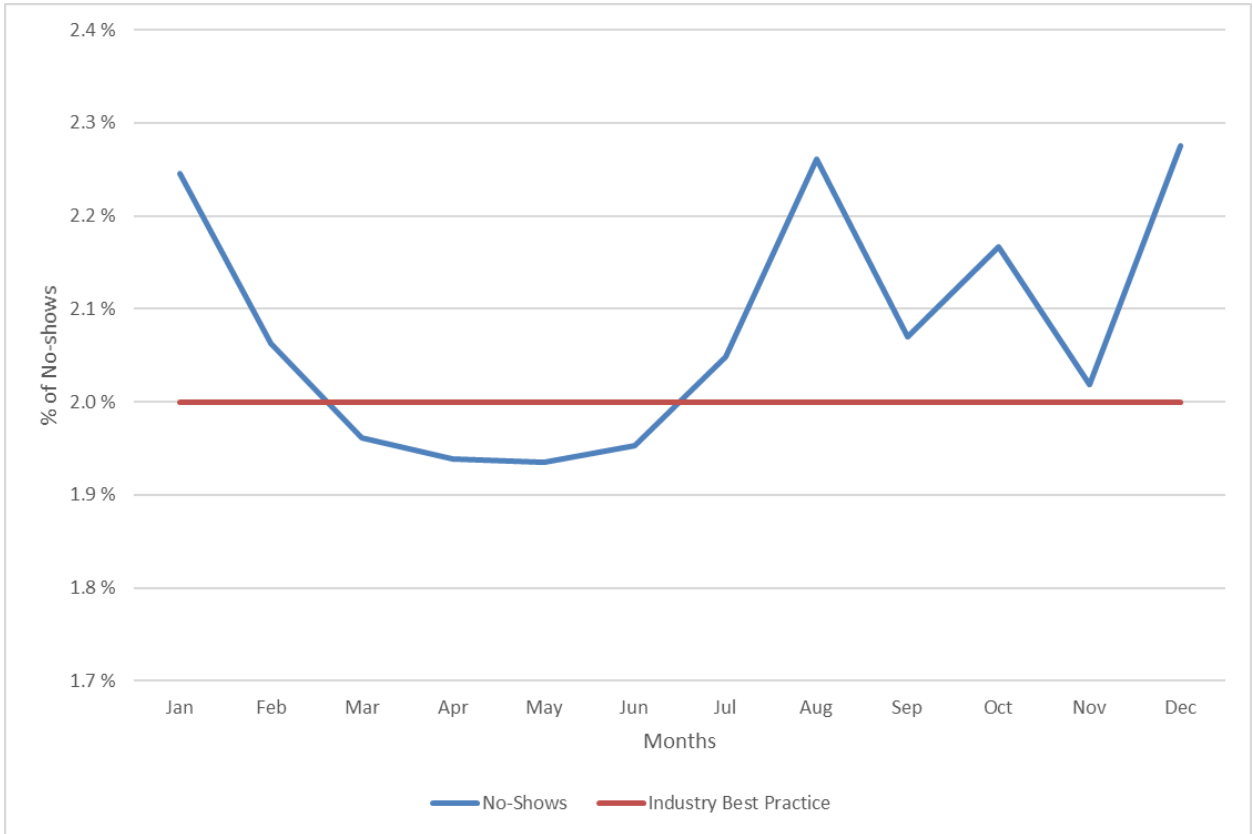
**2.4.4 No Shows and Late Cancellations**

LTC defines No-Shows as scheduled trips that a registrant does not wish to use and is not canceled at least 0.5 hours before the scheduled pick-up time. Late Cancellations refer to trips the registrant does not wish to use and not canceled at least three hours before the scheduled pick-up time. The publicized policy notes that any excessive Late Cancellations and/or No-Shows could result in suspension of an individual’s access to Specialized Transit for a stipulated period of time. Letters shared with customers in breach of this policy outline the next steps in the process up to and including the potential for suspension. In all cases, the customer is encouraged to contact LTC to discuss the situation in an effort to mitigate the issue going forward.

High rates of these occurrences can reduce the efficiency of the service by causing a vehicle to travel unnecessarily (incurring unneeded cost) and can negatively impact the effectiveness of the service and result in limiting the number of available trips for registered passengers (as it may be too late to reallocate the resource to provide another ride). As such, minimizing Late Cancellations and No-Shows is a priority for specialized transit agencies.

The CUTA Specialized Transit Services Industry Practices report sets a best practice for No Show occurrence at less than 1%. It should be noted that No Shows are defined differently than LTC, stating

that a No Show occurs when “a client fails to take a reserved trip and did not make an attempt to cancel.” LTC broadens this definition to trips cancelled within 0.5 hours. Therefore, given the broader definition used by LTC, a reasonable No-Show target should be less than 2% of all booked trips. In 2023, LTC tracked the ratio of No-Shows but not Late Cancellations. **Figure 7** illustrates that the Number of No-Shows was between 1.9 and 2.3%, which is within an acceptable range of the 2% target.



**Figure 7: Percentage of No-Shows in 2023**

## 3.0 Key Issues and Opportunities

The review of existing conditions identified a number of areas of improvement that should be considered as part of the Specialized Transit Five-Year Service Plan. A number of these issues were confirmed through the Voice of the Customer survey conducted by London Transit, key recommendations from the London Transit Accessibility Plan and engagement with the London Accessibility Advisory Committee. The key issues and opportunities that came from each of these are summarized below.

### 3.1 Voice of the Customer Survey

LTC started collecting conventional transit passenger information and insights through the Voice of the Customer survey in 2016, and the survey was expanded to cover Specialized Transit users as well in 2018. Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the survey was suspended in 2019, and resumed in 2023. The most recent survey, carried out in November 2023, included 351 responses collected from passengers who had taken at least one Specialized Transit trip in the previous six months. Among these respondents, over half (52%) of them were seniors aged 65 or above, and 68% of them considered Specialized Transit as their primary mode of transportation. The following summarizes the feedback noted in the survey, which should be considered as part of the five-year plan.

#### 3.1.1 Coverage

Ninety-seven (97) percent of survey respondents were either strongly satisfied or satisfied with the coverage of the service. The AODA requires that the Specialized Transit service be provided in the same service area as conventional transit. In London, the Specialized Transit service covers the entire city of London notwithstanding the numerous areas of the city that do not have access to the conventional service.

#### 3.1.2 Fare Price

Ninety-five (95) percent of respondents were strongly satisfied or satisfied with the fare price. This is 9% higher than the result in the 2019 survey.

#### 3.1.3 Trip Reliability

Respondents were asked about their perceptions of trip reliability based on satisfaction of on-time performance. The survey result showed that 91% of respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with the on-time performance. Only 5% of respondents indicated that LTC Specialized Transit vehicles usually pick them up within the pickup window. Noting that on-time performance was also rated as one of the top priorities for the service by the customers surveyed, this is considered a strength of the service today.

### 3.1.4 Booking and Accommodation

The survey asked respondents their level of satisfaction with trip availability, scheduling ease, and the booking window. In terms of trip availability, only 64% of the respondents were satisfied, which was 8% percent lower than the 2019 survey. For scheduling ease, only 57% of them were satisfied, which is 6% higher than the last survey, but still fairly low. The results show that more than one-third of the passengers were neutral or not satisfied with the service booking and accommodation. When respondents were asked whether they had a non-accommodated trip request, nearly half of them (48%) had at least one request not accommodated.

Regarding the booking window, 52% of the respondents were not satisfied with the current booking window requiring a trip to be booked three days in advance. Of the 52% of respondents that were not satisfied, the majority (90%) indicated they would like the booking window to be shorter.

It should be noted that there appears to a misunderstanding of the booking window policy, as respondents may have interpreted that trips cannot be booked **within** three days of the requested pick-up time, whereas the actual policy is that trips cannot be booked **outside of** three days of the requested pick-up time. Therefore, the desire to shorten the book window would not improve flexibility but would make it worse. It is recommended that the wording and communication around the booking window be reviewed as part of this plan.

### 3.1.5 Customer Service

Respondents were asked whether they had contacted customer service agents within the past year and whether their issue was resolved to their satisfaction. Eight percent (8%) of respondents indicated they had contacted customer service. Of the eight percent, approximately 75% indicated their issued had been resolved to their satisfaction.

### 3.1.6 Experience with Conventional Transit

Currently Specialized Transit registrants can ride conventional transit for free during off-peak hours upon showing the Off-Peak Pass. When asked whether respondents have ridden on the conventional transit in the past year, only 37% indicated that had used it, 53% of the respondents indicated they were not aware of this policy.

## 3.2 Accessibility Plan

Every five years, LTC publishes the Accessibility Plan to serve as a five-year plan established in compliance with requirements in the IASR. It sets out specific strategies to address local accessibility issues and regulatory requirements with input from the Accessible Public Transit Service Advisory Committee (APTSAC) and stakeholders collected from online surveys, public drop in, Voice of the Passenger survey and customer/stakeholder contacts. The recent Accessibility Plan 2020-2025 identified an array of work plan initiatives. **Appendix A** shows the status of each of the recommendations, while

**Table 2** shows actions relevant to Specialized Transit that should be addressed as part of this Five-Year Service Plan.

**Table 2: Accessibility Plan Initiatives for Specialized Transit**

Work Plan Initiative	Status and Action
<b>Assess Impacts of a Shorter Booking Window</b>	This was also identified as part of the Voice of the Passenger Survey. A review of best practices and a recommendation on the booking window will be completed as part of the Service Plan.
<b>Undertake Assessment of Highest periods of Non-Accommodated Trips</b>	This is completed annually. This data was reviewed as part of Specialized Transit Service Plan to identify any areas to increase resources.
<b>Integrated Services</b>	The plan identified the opportunity to implement an integrated service delivery model between Specialized and conventional transit. Integrated Services occur when specialized and conventional transit services are utilized together to increase the availability of service in the community. These types of services are in place in other transit systems in the province. The recommendation is to further explore the feasibility of implementing this model in London during the time-frame of this service plan.

### 3.3

## Accessible Public Transit Service Advisory Committee

The project team arranged a meeting with the London Accessible Public Transit Service Advisory Committee on February 13, 2024 to discuss the ongoing LTC Business Plan and Service Strategy Study. Further input from the Committee was sent to the Dillon team following the meeting. Comments regarding the accessibility of the Specialized Transit service are included below:

- Trip Booking:** The Committee identified a challenge in booking trips, where most passengers need to call three days in advance of their ride or they won't get the desired trip they are looking for. The current policy is that trips need to be booked within three days of the requested pick-up time. There was also a desire for additional booking options and improvements to the booking process which will be accommodated with the implementation of the new booking/scheduling software.
- Riding the Vehicle:** Members of the Committee noted that more information would be helpful regarding when a vehicle is arriving or when it will be late to allow customers more time to get ready for the pick-up. Additional information request includes real-time data on the bus and notification on when they are the next passenger to be picked up. Sometimes on-time performance is not good, and notification of late pick-up or drop-off is required. Some felt that text messaging would be the most effective way to receive this information. These requests will also be addressed with the new booking/scheduling software being implemented in 2024.

- **Fares:** Members of the Committee noted that passenger fares are reasonable. There is more information required about the Off-Peak Transit pass, and who is eligible and how to use it. There was also a desire to use the smart card on Specialized Transit. It should be noted that this will be in place in the Spring 2024.

### 3.4 Summary of Improvement Opportunities

The above sections outlined how well the existing service is meeting best practices, key areas for improvement identified through engagement and opportunities for improvement. These can be summarized into the following areas of improvement that will be addressed in the Service Plan.

- **Trip Booking Window:** Assess the desire to change the booking window and increase options and reduce waiting time to book rides. This initiative must be undertaken in a manner that ensures those providing feedback understand the implications of any adjustment.
- **Move Towards an Integrated Service Delivery Model:** Integrated Service Delivery identifies options to increase the number of trip options for registered customers by promoting the use of an accessible conventional service for all or part of their trip. In order for service integration to be successful, the conventional service needs to be able to accommodate the new rides in a convenient manner. The current crowding and schedule adherence issues being experienced on the conventional service will need to be addressed prior to launching service integration.
- **Improve the Application Process:** Identify opportunities to enhance the application and related process to make it clearer and to collect information to prepare for a move to an Integrated Service Delivery Model.
- **Provide Clearer Policies and Statistics Tracking:** Identify opportunities to provide clarity on policies and improve how key performance indicators are tracked.
- **Optimization of Existing Service Elements:** Identify potential improvements to service models that are responsive to shifting ridership trends including but not limited to the use of the Off-Peak Pass, workshop shuttles and operations around key origins and destinations.
- **Increase Availability of Service:** Identify increase in revenue vehicle hours that should be added each year to support a growing demand for Specialized Transit.



## Community Feedback

A round of consultation was conducted to present the draft transit service plans (both specialized and conventional), and to allow residents to provide their feedback on recommended changes. A public open house was hosted at the Central Public Library in downtown London on May 28 between 2:00 - 4:00pm and 6:00 - 8:00pm with 24 people in attendance. The public open house included several informative and interactive boards as well as a comment sheet.

Additional pop-up engagement events were held in Covent Garden on May 24 in the early afternoon and Cherry Hill Mall on May 29 in the morning. Approximately 40 members of the public attended these pop-ups, and a variety of feedback was collected. A virtual engagement session was also held May 14, 2024, in a joint meeting with the Accessible Public Transit Advisory Committee, which was attended by 25 members of the public.

To round out engagement, an online survey was also available for residents to provide their feedback, linked to the LTC website. The survey was available between May 9<sup>th</sup> and June 7<sup>th</sup> 2024. Overall, there were 1157 completed responses to the online survey, which included questions for both specialized and conventional transit service users, as well as those who don't use transit at all today in London. A total of 57 individuals chose to provide feedback regarding the specialized service plan. Survey respondents provided their feedback on a variety of topics, including requests for improved service in specific areas of the city, what respondents valued most about transit service, what non-riders primary concerns were regarding using LTC services, and feedback regarding the draft service plan. Many responses shared common themes of wanting more frequent, reliable and convenient bus service.

Those who identified as specialized transit users indicated that they used specialized transit for a diverse array of reasons, with the most popular reason being shopping, errands and groceries. Other reasons, such as medical appointments, religious activities, work, education, social or recreational activities all of which demonstrated fairly consistent demand. These trip types are also consistent with the most requested time period for additional service hours, which was between 2:00pm and 6:00pm in the afternoon. The least requested periods of additional service were in the early morning (before 7:00am) and in the late evening (after 9:00pm).

Comments received regarding the proposed changes to the booking window showed mixed support. Irrespective of the current 3-day window and the proposed 7-day window, some respondents simply noted that they hope for increased vehicle availability so that fewer trips are left unaccommodated. Others explained how they wished to make last-minute trips, and others stated they wished for the ability to book several months in advance for scheduled appointments. Further information and feedback on the service plan can be found in the Engagement Report.

## 5.0

## Recommendations

## 5.1

### Trip Booking Window

As described above, LTC currently provides a 3-day booking window for Specialized Transit. Passengers that want to book a trip must book the trip within 3 days of their desire to travel. The London Accessibility Plan identified an assessment of the option to move to a 24-hour booking window based on stakeholder feedback. This would mean that passengers could not book outside of a 24-hour period from when their trip would begin.

Different transit agencies have various maximum booking windows. These are typically fourteen days, seven days and three days. There are very few examples of booking windows that are one day. Booking restricted to one day would cause passengers to lose spontaneity and create unnecessary anxiety. **Table 3** lists the booking window of other specialized transit services in Ontario:

**Table 3: Peer Agency Practices of Booking Window**

Agencies	Min. Booking Window	Max. Booking Window
London	1 hour	3 days
Barrie Transit	1 hour	7 days
Burlington Transit	48 hours	14 days
Grand River Transit	1 hour	7 days
Guelph Transit	1 hour	7 days
Hamilton Street Railway	1 hour	7 days
Niagara Region Transit	24 hours	14 days
Oakville Transit	1 hour	10 days
TransHelp (Peel Region)	6 hours	7 days
Windsor Transit	2 hours	28 days
York Region Transit	15 hours	3 days

From the above table, the booking window of most agencies ranges from 1 hour to 7 days. The agency with the shortest booking window, York Region Transit, accepts booking at most 3 days in advance. This is in line with the current practice of LTC.

The advantages and disadvantages of each model were reviewed and assessed in **Table 4** below, noting that the booking window cannot be assessed in isolation of the current ability of the service to meet demand. The table below provides commentary with respect to various booking windows for other transit services. In many cases, they represent an environment where service levels are meeting demand, which is not the current situation in London.

**Table 4: Comparison of Longer and Shorter Booking Window**

Factors	Longer Booking Window	Shorter Booking Window	Comment
Increased Customer Assurance	✓		Longer booking windows provides more assurance for important trips, particularly for passengers with a medical appointment.
Improved Trip Flexibility		✓	Short booking windows may increase flexibility as passengers tend to book at the end of the booking window.
Reduction of No Shows and Late Cancellations		✓	With more flexibility and spontaneity with a shorter booking window, passengers may be less likely to cancel trips late or not show up at the trip as the trip booking is closer to their pick-up date.
Reduction of Trip Denials		✓	Long booking windows may result in high trip denials for same day trips as many registrants may book trips ahead of time and there may be more late cancellations and no shows.
Reduction of Call Centre Resources Required	✓		Reduced booking windows may result in a significant influx of people booking when the booking window opens, which may increase call centre wait times.

From the above table, it can be inferred that a longer booking window better assures passengers their trip will be accommodated because trip requests made over the longer booking window. However, as a consequence, passengers would need to plan ahead for their travel, which reduces trip spontaneity. For no-shows and late cancellations, the closer a passenger books their trip to the date of travel, the higher the likelihood that they will complete their trip, potentially reducing no-shows and late cancellations. This provides cost savings for LTC and increases ride availability for other passengers. With regards to peer agency practices in **Table 3**, most peer agencies have maintained a seven-day maximum booking window.

For London, one of the challenges is that because the supply of vehicles has not kept pace with demand, most passengers currently call at 7:00 am three days before their trip to try to secure a trip required, fearing their trip may be denied if they wait any longer. Shortening the booking window with the existing capacity issues would not be advisable under current conditions. Increasing the booking window to seven days, under current conditions would likely result in the majority of trips being booked at 7:00 am seven days before the trip instead of three days before, thus reducing the ability of clients to book more spontaneous trips. As discussed earlier, the booking window issues cannot be viewed in isolation of the system's capacity to meet demand.

A review of the LTC website provides a section on Booking Specialized Transit Services, which clearly states that “anyone registered for the service can call in and book a trip up to three days in advance (see chart below) of when they would like to go.” The chart provided on the website is illustrated below and

informs passengers when to book a trip for the day they want to travel. While the definition is clear, the chart could be adjusted to make it clearer that the “Call this Day” does not represent the day the customer should call, but rather the day the first available day the passenger should call.

One option is to change the first column to say, “Call Between” and add the range of dates a passenger should call (e.g. “Call Between” “Monday to Thursday” to Book on Thursday).

Call This Day	To Book This Day
Monday	Thursday
Tuesday	Friday
Wednesday	Saturday
Thursday	Sunday
Friday	Monday
Saturday	Tuesday
Sunday	Wednesday

**Figure 8: Example of Booking Window Guideline from LTC Website**

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that London Transit consider the following with respect to the booking window in the latter part of this plan’s horizon once the significant increases in service hours are in place:

- Increasing the maximum trip booking window to seven days and identify a minimum booking window of 1 hour of the requested pick-up time. This consideration will require that stakeholders providing feedback are provided with a clear understanding of the impacts of any changes to the booking window noting that current community perception is that a move to a shorter booking window would be better.
- Adjust the definition of the trip booking window to the LTC website and other materials provided to registered customers to make it clear about the maximum and minimum booking window.

## 5.2

### **Moving Towards an Integrated Service Delivery Model**

One of the key recommendations that came from the Accessibility Plan was the desire to move toward an integrated service delivery model, or the ‘Home-to-Hub’ strategy as suggested in CUTA Specialized Transit Services Industry Practices report. This model involves either encouraging or booking trips that involve a transfer between a Specialized Transit vehicle to a conventional fixed-route service for registrants that have the ability to do so. Integrated service models are in place or being introduced in other transit systems, including York Region, Durham Region, the City of Calgary and City of Toronto.

The service model is most effective where a client’s most limiting factor to using conventional service is the distance they must travel to/from the nearest bus stop; a barrier which could be overcome by a short ride on a specialized transit vehicle.

### 5.2.1 Defining an Integrated Service Model

The goal of an integrated service model is to encourage the use of any type of transit service provided by LTC to help a registered passenger make their trip, subject to the conditions of their specialized transit eligibility. For example, when a registered Specialized Transit passenger calls to book a Specialized Transit trip, based on their eligibility, the booking agent may identify that the trip would involve using Specialized Transit at either or both the start and/or end of their trip to access an accessible conventional fixed-route bus at an accessible terminal or bus stop.

The decision about whether to book an integrated trip should be based on a number of conditions being met. This includes the booking agent asking the following questions:

1. How many transfers would the integrated trip require? Is the passenger capable of making them?
2. Does the transfer location provide a safe, comfortable, and accessible waiting environment? Is there any staff available at the transfer location to assist the passenger to make the transfer if required?
3. Does the conventional route that the registered passenger would be transferring to/from provide frequent and reliable service?
4. Does the Specialized Transit operator need to wait for the passenger to board the conventional transit vehicle?
5. Is the leg of the trip which would be made on conventional transit service long enough to justify the transfer? Are clients being inconvenienced by adding a transfer for only a short trip on conventional transit?
6. Will the registered passenger have a similar trip duration on an integrated trip as they would on a full door-to-door trip?

### 5.2.2 Cost/Benefit of an Integrated Trip

An integrated service delivery model can introduce riders to conventional service who otherwise may not have chosen to use it independently. The conventional portion of an integrated trip would include an additional level of support from a booking agent, as well as travel training if it is provided, which may serve to reduce uncertainty about using conventional service. Furthermore, if a passenger becomes comfortable using conventional service as part of an integrated trip or independently, this would increase their overall mobility and could be seen as an improvement in service.

Integrated trips will also reduce the trip distance provided by a Specialized Transit vehicle, which would allow LTC to reinvest the hours and make the service more available and reliable for all passengers, including those that cannot use an accessible fixed-route service. By contrast, when a client has unconditional eligibility, or conditional eligibility but their conditions are present, they will still receive a door-to-door Specialized Transit trip.

Integrated trips are optimal for longer distance trips on the future BRT network as well as on existing Express and Base Arterial routes that are direct and frequent with a high proportion of accessible stops. By focusing on more direct and frequent routes, the travel time of using an integrated trip may not be negatively impacted, depending on the extent of ridesharing on the Specialized Transit service.

### 5.2.3 Steps Required to Move to an Integrated Service Delivery Model

Moving to an integrated service delivery model is not an easy process, and steps should be taken to encourage these trips to occur for individuals that are able to take an accessible conventional transit service for part of their trip. While all passengers should have the ability to request an integrated trip for any trip they would like to take, it is recommended that customer call centre staff suggest integrated trips to registrants that have successfully undertaken the travel training program. It is also recommended that for this model to be successful, it would eventually transition to be tied to eligibility. There are several steps that can be taken to move to an integrated service delivery model. These include the following:

1. Update application form to understand who could be accommodated on integrated trips.
2. Define integrated trips (routes and stops).
3. Create travel training program.
4. Address crowding issues on priority integrated conventional routes.
5. Identify options for incident management.
6. Adopt an eligibility-based integrated model.

Integrated trips should be offered to all passengers who are conditionally eligible, regardless of whether the travel time is shorter or longer than a Specialized Transit trip. The latter case may still provide greater flexibility and spontaneity and should be suggested to passengers.

To provide the highest level of service, the conventional network must be fully built and operate at frequencies that are conducive for convenient transfers (i.e., 15 minutes or less), during periods where there is no significant crowding on vehicles. Until this network is in place, integrated trips are not recommended. LTC should only consider implementing integrated services trips (see **Step 6** below) within a passenger's ability when there has been increased investment in the conventional transit network and crowding issues currently being experienced are addressed.

#### 5.2.3.1 Step 1: Update Application Form

The current application form should be updated to identify if an integrated trip can be arranged for a passenger based on their eligibility condition. **Section 5.3.1** below provides more discussions regarding this step.

#### 5.2.3.2 Step 2: Define Integrated Trips

When promoting integrated trips, they should provide a similar travel time to a passenger as those that are provided fully by Specialized Transit or be able to meet a same-day travel request if a complete

door-to-door Specialized Transit trip is not available. This would suggest focusing on long-distance trips where the conventional fixed-route portion of the trip is frequent, direct and has semi-express or transit priority features. Stops also need to be accessible to allow vehicles to layover and passengers to transfer between vehicles without barriers. **Table 5** below provides recommendations for integrated trips:

**Table 5: Characteristics of Integrated Routes and Transfer Points**

Priorities	Integrated Routes	Integrated Transfer Points
<b>Required</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20-minute peak headways or less.</li> <li>• Located on a long-distance arterial (minimum 8 km in length).</li> <li>• Vehicles that operate on corridors where over 75% of stops are fully accessible.</li> <li>• Average crowding on route during time of trip is 125% of seated capacity or less.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stop is accessible based on London’s accessibility guideline.</li> <li>• Paved hard surface path for passengers transferring between Specialized Transit and conventional transit bus.</li> <li>• Sufficient space for Specialized Transit vehicle to layover without impeding the conventional transit vehicle.</li> <li>• Integrated stop should be in place for both directions of the trip (within close proximity to each other).</li> <li>• Presence of adequate lighting, bench, shelter.</li> </ul>
<b>Preferred</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15-minute peak headways or less;</li> <li>• Over 95% of stops on the route are accessible.</li> <li>• Average crowding on route during time of trip is 100% of seated capacity or less.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located at a transit terminal with multiple connections to accessible conventional transit routes.</li> <li>• Located at terminal.</li> <li>• Passenger amenities, such as washroom, heated shelter, indoor waiting area, are available and accessible.</li> </ul>

While these are considered preference when encouraging registrants to take an integrated trip, any accessible bus route with an accessible stop can be used as an integrated trip when the condition that prevents a registrant from using conventional transit is the ability to walk/roll from their pick-up/drop-off point to an accessible transit stop.

**5.2.3.3 Step 3: Create Travel Training Program to Include Integrated Trips**

If London Transit were to move to an integrated service delivery model, it is recommended that LTC develop the requisite training program parameters for use going forward. Subsequent to the development of the training program, the decision can be made with respect to how the program will be delivered (e.g. by London Transit or in cooperation with third party agencies who could train their specific clientele) to better align it with the integrated service model. The goal is to provide passengers

the opportunity to learn how to transfer to and from and use conventional portions of an integrated trip through group or one-on-one training, in which a travel trainer helps the passenger identify the correct platform or location to board a conventional vehicle, pay the fare, secure their mobility device (if applicable), identify their stop, disembark, and find their Specialized Transit vehicle to transfer to (if applicable). Taking a one-on-one training as an example, the travel trainer would stay with the passenger for the duration of the trip if deemed necessary and be available for the return trip if necessary. At this point, the travel trainer would determine whether the passenger could make additional integrated trips on their own, requires additional training, or should not be recommended for integrated trips. This information would need to be updated on the passenger's file and visible to the customer service agent. In some cases, the training may also include how to plan a trip using maps and timetables to increase the confidence level of passengers in utilizing an integrated trip. To avoid any conflict of interest, the agency providing travel training should not be the same as the one tasked with completing the applicant eligibility assessments.

## 5.2.3.4

#### **Step 4: Address Crowding and On-Time Performance Issues on Priority Integrated Routes**

There are two spots on each conventional bus route that will accommodate a personal mobility device and three priority seats that are encouraged to be used by the elderly or persons with disabilities. In the existing network, a number of routes experience crowding issues, particularly during the peaks, which limits the ability for these seats and spaces to be used comfortably by persons with disabilities. Therefore, as mentioned in **Step 2** above, bus routes that are targeted for use for integrated trips should take route frequency into account as a high frequency (e.g., every 15 minutes or less), which reduces the occurrence of a pass-by trip when vehicles are full.

Routes experiencing significant crowding should not be used for an integrated trip. The Conventional Transit Service Plan (under separate cover) recommends several frequency improvements to the fixed route network. This would result in several routes that could be encouraged for an integrated trip within five years, however, this only represents a small number of routes within the LTC network. It should be noted that for integrated service delivery to make a real difference, additional investment to address crowding and frequency need to be made.

As discussed in **Section 2.4.2**, the drop-offs were concentrated in downtown, including Richmond Street, Queens Avenue/King Street, and two sections on Dundas Street and Hamilton Road. Integrated trips should be prioritized to these locations where frequency targets and overcrowding concerns are addressed to maximize the number of passengers utilizing these trips.

Integrated trips will also increase the dwell time when customers are transferring between Specialized and conventional services, as bus operators may be required to operate the ramp and secure customers with a wheelchair to their seats. This could further impact routes that are currently experiencing on-time performance issues. As loading and unloading activities of integrated trips would increase travel time of conventional transit, it is also recommended to integrated trips on routes that do not have significant schedule adherence issues and to maintain a balance of maintaining scheduling adherence and promoting integrated trips.



To be successful, Specialized Transit passenger call takers should be provided with information on route crowding and on-time performance, by routinely monitoring dashboards that show typical crowding and schedule adherence by route and period, or by using other trip planning tools that monitor typical vehicle occupancy levels using cell phone data from passengers onboard to avoid scheduling an integrated trip utilizing overload departures of conventional transit.

## 5.2.3.5

### Step 5: Identify Options for Incident Management

It is recommended that the implementation of an integrated service delivery model includes an incident management process to support vulnerable passengers using conventional transit. Transferring between Specialized Transit and conventional transit can present risks, including bus pass-bys, loss of power in a motorized mobility device, or unexpected service disruptions, detours or construction around accessible stops.

Moving to an integrated service model should include having policies in place to mitigate potential issues. This should include policies around:

**1. Waiting at the Conventional Stop**

This policy should clearly outline when a Specialized Transit vehicle should wait at the conventional stop for the Specialized Transit passenger to transfer from a conventional route. Generally, this should be based on the frequency of service and the independence and mobility of the customer (e.g. whether based on the application, LTC believes the customer can wait up to 15 minutes at a bus stop for a vehicle to arrive).

**2. Missed Connections**

This policy would focus on what to do if a Specialized Transit vehicle is late for a connection. This may include having the vehicle make the full door-to-door trip or dropping off the passenger to wait at the stop based on the timing of the next conventional bus.

**3. Travelling with Companions**

This policy would determine whether a companion would pay a fare when they board the conventional portion of an integrated trip.

**4. Operator Assistance when Transferring**

This policy would focus on when a Specialized Transit operator would need to assist a passenger to transfer between a Specialized Transit vehicle and a conventional transit vehicle.

**5. Passenger not able to Board the Conventional Bus**

This policy would provide instructions on what an operator should do in the event of a pass-by (e.g. the conventional vehicle if full and cannot accommodate the Specialized Transit passenger). In the event of a conventional route pass-by where the Specialized Transit vehicle has not waited for the transfer to take place, the next step should be that the conventional transit operator radio dispatch and inform them that a passenger was not able to board the vehicle. This would only be an option if the passenger has a visible disability (e.g., uses a wheelchair) or the passenger has identified that

they are a Specialized Transit client and are taking an integrated trip. At this point, the customer call centre can decide whether:

- The next bus will be available shortly and the passenger is able to wait; or
- To radio a Specialized Transit vehicle to pick-up the passenger to complete their trip.

If these solutions cannot be accommodated, some transit agencies that use the integrated service model use on-street supervisors to address the situation. This would involve radioing an on-street supervisor to drive to the area where the passenger is waiting to make sure they are 'okay'. As ridership continues to grow, additional accessible supervisor vehicles should be added to the network.

### 5.2.3.6

#### Step 6: Move to Full Integrated Model

The above five steps focus on the preparation of establishing an integrated service delivery model by providing training to passengers and minimizing the risk of incidents affecting the completion of these trips. Once passengers are familiar with the integrated model and LTC has addressed crowding issues on conventional transit and developed a sophisticated event management mechanism, LTC should proceed with a full integrated model scheduling trips according to passengers' conditions of eligibility. Under this model, rather than providing passengers a choice between complete Specialized Transit or integrated trips, those who are conditionally eligible would be given integrated trips only according to the eligibility information on file.

Recently, York Region Transit has introduced this full integrated model into their specialized transit service, which has resulted in a reduction in Specialized Transit service kilometres and increase in the number of Specialized Transit trips.

#### Recommendations:

It is recommended that London Transit:

- Begin the steps required to transition to an integrated service delivery model, but not actively promote integrated trips until the Steps 1 – 5 in the summary above are complete.
- Update the application form to request more information on conditions that would allow a registrant to use conventional transit for part of or all of their trip (see **Section 5.3.1**). This would require current registrants to be reassessed as part of the recertification process (see **Section 4.3.4**)
- Confirm routes that should be targeted for integrated trips based on the guidelines provided in **Table 5**.
- Conduct a full accessibility audit of all conventional bus stops and identify those that should be prioritized for transfers between Specialized and conventional transit vehicles.
- Update design guidelines for stops where transfers between Specialized Transit and conventional transit vehicles can take place, ensuring there is space for Specialized Transit vehicles to wait for a transfer to be completed without impeding the conventional transit vehicles.

- Update policies and procedures for operators to include a policy when the Specialized Transit operator should wait for the transfer to take place, assistance provided by operator when transferring between vehicles and what to do in an event of a pass-by.
- Further assess the need to move to an eligibility-based integrated service delivery model in year 4 to 5 of this plan once the above recommendations are completed.

## 5.3 Improvements to Application Process

### 5.3.1 Eligibility and Application Form

As noted in **Section 2.3.2**, the current application process is effective, but some opportunities for improvement were identified in the application to help improve clarity and as an initial step that would help London Transit move to an integrated service model. These improvement opportunities include:

#### **Application Process**

The application form provides information on the process and the right to appeal if eligibility is denied. There is no information on the form that provides information on timing of when a decision is expected to be reached, or the ability to based on the category of eligibility approved. Appeals based on eligibility category may become more common as London Transit begins to move towards approving more registrants under the conditional eligibility category. The right to appeal this should be clearly stated in the application form.

The instructions for the application form request passengers to drop off or mail the completed form to the London Transit Commission office on Highbury Avenue. As noted in **Section 5.3.2**, an option should be added to allow applicants to email a completed form as well.

#### **Part A: Introduction and Eligibility for Specialized Transit Services**

This section of the application form describes five service delivery options that London Transit provides that can be used by persons with disabilities (Community Bus, Trip Planning, Workshop and Medical Shuttles, Travel Training and Paratransit). While outlining each of the mobility options that are available is an effective strategy, this section labels them all as Specialized Transit, suggesting that a person is required to be registered as a Specialized Transit customer to use each one.

In reality, an individual does not need to be registered for Specialized Transit to use the Community Bus or participate in Trip Planning and Travel Training programs. It is recommended that this distinction be made to make it clearer what the applicant is applying for, while also outlining the other accessible services and programs they can use.

It is also recommended to remove “Medical Shuttles” from the form, as this service is no longer offered by London Transit. Workshop Shuttles should also be changed to “Group Shuttles” to increase the potential use for other types of group trips.

These changes would also require the change in wording in other sections, noting that eligibility is for door-to-door Specialized Transit and Group Shuttles only.

More information on the LTC conventional system should also be included to illustrate how the transit system is accessible and easy to understand. These could include the kneeling features, front door ramps for easy boarding, designated wheelchair securement areas, auditory and visual stop announcements, priority seating, and the ability to have a personal attendant with them. Understanding this may help applicants and health care professionals better understand the barriers to using the conventional transit service.

### **Eligibility**

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This section of the application form outlines three categories of eligibility an application may be approved for. The description of Conditional eligibility includes an example related to extreme weather or variable environmental barriers. Other examples should be considered in this section as London Transit looks to expand its use. **Section 5.3.2** provides more details on this recommendation.

### **Part B – Applicant Information and Travel Requirements**

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In the Travel Requirements Section, the application requests information on what they will use the service for. This question adds little value as LTC does not use this information to book trips. It is recommended that this question be removed.

### **Part C – Applicant Self-Evaluation**

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The beginning of this section requests information on the medical classification of the diagnosis or condition in terms of functional impairment that impacts ability to access conventional transit. Three categories that are missing from the list include: Cognitive disability and Physical Mobility Impairment. These should be added for completeness.

Question 2 in this section asks, “I can usually get to and from a regular transit bus stop”, then lists a number of options:

- Independently;
- With an attendant accompanying me;
- With travel training;
- When the path is free from ice and snow; or
- Other.

There may be benefit to further explaining what travel training is and the benefits it would provide, particularly for individuals that do not know about the program. The word ‘accessible’ should also be added to the ‘transit bus stop’ and other options such as ‘during the day’ or ‘in temperate weather’ should be added to reflect conditions of use more broadly. A question should also be asked about how far an applicant can walk/roll better understand how proximity to the bus stop impacts their ability to use conventional transit.

Question 3 asks about the ability of an applicant to ride a fixed-route bus and provides three options:

- I can usually ride on a public transit fixed-route bus;
- I can ride on a public transit fixed-route bus if I have an attendant with me; or
- I cannot ride on a public transit fixed-route bus.

These are very general responses that do not get into the details of the conditions that would prevent an applicant from riding a fixed-route bus. Some additional responses that could be added include:

- I have never taken London fixed-route bus and am unfamiliar how to use it;
- I can ride a public transit fixed-route bus if there is a seat available or a wheelchair position for me to secure my mobility device; or
- I can usually ride on an accessible fixed-route bus, but only on routes familiar to me.

#### **Part D – Professional Certification**

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This section of the form is for medical professionals to fill out.

Question 2 asked the medical profession a number of questions about the applicant’s ability to use conventional transit. The following are suggested edits based on the options provided:

- “Walk to a bus stop” – This should be reworded to include “Walk/roll to an accessible bus stop” and a distance be provided (e.g. up to 400 metres or 5 minutes).
- “Get on/off a bus? (note: most London Transit buses have one step, and many buses are wheelchair accessible.” – This response needs to be updated as all London Transit buses are now fully wheelchair accessible.
- “Does the applicant have a visual impairment that may prevent them from safely accessing regular fixed-route bus services?” – This is very subjective as many registrants with a visual impairment use the conventional transit service. Therefore, there may be other conditions outside of the visual impairment that may pervert the use of the conventional transit service.
- “Does the applicant have any cognitive limitations that may limit him/her from completing any part of the bus journey? (i.e. notifying the driver about his/her correct stop)” – This should be expanded on to include “routes that the passenger is familiar with and takes regularly with travel training” versus “routes that a passenger does not take frequently and is unfamiliar with”.

Question 3 in this section asks medical professionals to identify whether the applicant’s disability/condition prevents them from taking conventional transit and outlines a number of scenarios. Only one condition is identified “cannot use transit in the winter only”. Additional conditions should be added including where an applicant’s disability/condition prevents them from using conventional transit. Some examples are provided below in **Section 5.3.2** below.

#### **Other Additions to the Form**

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In addition to the above, other information would be helpful to provide in the form, including additional information on the health care professional section with regards to community bus, accessible bus routes and integrated service model. Include description in one or two sentences about how these

service models work, and possibly share an example to better prepare the professional with decision making.

Apart from amendments related to integrated trips, the application form could be improved by expanding questions to include assessing the functional abilities related to neurodivergent disabilities, sensory disabilities and mental health disabilities, and including information to a person’s emergency contact or Power of Attorney (as applicable) regarding the functional abilities required for Specialized transit. The application form should also define recertification to ensure passengers understand that re-assessments may take place at specific intervals in alignment with the AODA. Additionally, the application form could apply more inclusive language by shifting away from outdated terminology such as “restrictions”, “limited abilities”, etc.

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that London Transit:

- Update the application form to include a number of the suggested edits above.

### 5.3.2 Review of Conditional Eligibility

Industry best practices highlight the importance of matching the correct type of service to each passenger. As discussed throughout this Service Plan, LTC operates a fully accessible fleet and has been continuing to invest in the accessibility of bus stops. LTC also operates six Community Bus routes, which are designed to reduce walk/roll distance to major destinations of interest to specialized transit passengers. Matching the correct type of service to each passenger will maximize the use of this investment in accessible conventional transit and will also increase the availability of Specialized Transit services to those individuals that have no other public transit option.

While the absence of conditional eligibility limits the above objective, its current definition as shown in **Section 2.3.1** is also narrow in scope. There are many other conditions other than extreme weather or variable environmental barriers in which a registered passenger is not capable of using conventional transit. Examples include:

- Time of day, such as peak times or night times;
- Seasonal variations, such as summer for passengers that experience worsening and exacerbation of symptoms in hot weather (e.g., multiple sclerosis);
- Trip purpose, such as dialysis trips for passengers who only face barriers to conventional services when traveling to/from dialysis appointments;
- Proximity or accessibility of the bus stop; and
- Cognitive unfamiliarity, such as passengers with cognitive disabilities who are unfamiliar with routes away from their residence or workplace.

Note that introducing additional conditions requires specific technology and software capabilities as well as both public and staff education and training to ensure specialized transit passengers have the precise service they require. LTC is currently exploring options for new technology and software capabilities.

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that London Transit:

- Move towards incorporating more examples of conditional eligibility in the application form and begin to identify conditionally eligible registrants.
- Recertify existing registrants against the new criteria (see **Section 5.3.4**).

**5.3.3****Provide Online Specialized Transit Application Form**

LTC currently provides two options for applicants to submit their completed application forms: mail or drop off to Highbury Office. Providing multiple submission options improves the passenger experience of the application process by allowing applicants to choose the method that is most convenient for them, including options that do not require a physical submission.

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that London Transit:

- Modify the application form to allow for a fillable pdf document that can be emailed to LTC to further facilitate user-friendly application choices.

**5.3.4****Recertification Process**

Presently, LTC has no formal recertification process in place. Recertification is a critical component to effectively managing eligibility, service levels and understanding how to best match passengers with the level of transit service they need. Disabilities are not often static, rather they evolve and change over time across the spectrum of functional abilities. With the absence of a recertification process, LTC risks having outdated passenger information and the necessity of a periodic eligibility clean-up of inactive or ineligible registrants. The AODA specifies that transit agencies may reassess eligibility at reasonable intervals. Industry best practice recommends that all registrants are recertified every three to five years, with the potential of registrants with a temporary eligibility being reassessed more often. It is imperative that the transit service provided to passengers is customized according to their unique needs and abilities. This approach would ensure that each passenger receives the most appropriate level of service, and that resources are utilized efficiently to optimize operations. Future considerations should include minimizing and reducing additional barriers for passengers with disabilities.

Many transit agencies set a maximum eligibility period at the time of registering for the service. This builds the reassessment into the administrative processes of these organizations and should be included in the updated application form.

For existing registrants (both active and inactive), it is recommended that they be reassessed using the updated application process which includes conditions that would allow for integrated service delivery. to ensure those with the ability to use more accessible conventional transit for all or a portion of their

travel needs and / or with supports such as travel training are aligned with the most appropriate service level.

The reassessment of existing registrants should be completed over a three to four-year period to minimize resources required to complete the recertification. This may require increased internal capacity. The process could begin with a postcard mailout to all passengers, with follow-up phone call interviews or full application process depending on the nature of an individual's disability.

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that London Transit:

- Set a maximum eligibility period on the updated application form, including setting a recertification process every three to five years.
- Begin the process of recertification of existing registrants, split over a three to four year period.
- Use a process that involves registrants mail-outs with follow-up phone calls or in-person assessments based on the assessment of London Transit staff.

## 5.4 Optimization of Existing Service Elements

### 5.4.1 Off-Peak Pass

Based on LTC's policies, all approved Specialized Transit registrants are eligible to obtain an Off-Peak Pass allowing them to travel for free on conventional transit from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm and from 6:00 pm until end of service on weekdays and anytime on weekends. Registrants are provided with an Off-Peak pass at the time of registration.

As noted in the **Section 3.1**, more than half (53%) of the respondents from the recent Voice of the Customer survey were not aware of the Off-Peak Pass. While the awareness is low, the survey also noted that 37% of registered Specialized Transit respondents have ridden conventional transit in the past year. This suggests that several registrants who have unconditional eligibility for Specialized Transit are using the Off-Peak Pass to ride conventional transit. A review of inactive registrants being conducted by London Transit also identified that several inactive registrants that have not used Specialized Transit for over a year regularly use the Off-Peak Pass for conventional transit. This further reinforces the need to better understand the conditions on which registrants are able to take an accessible fixed-route service for all or part of their trip by updating the application form.

The Off-Peak pass continues to be a valuable tool to encourage the use of accessible fixed-route transit, however, it would be a benefit to gain a better understanding of the conditions in which it is being used so that the program may be tailored going forward. While the Pass reduces overall cost and demand for Specialized Transit, it also reduces the amount of revenue collected on the conventional transit service and was implemented at a time when there was excess capacity on the conventional service during off-peak periods, which is no longer the case.



It is therefore recommended that LTC revisit the program in conjunction with the other initiative, particularly the revision to the Application Process as suggested in **Section 4.3**.

The Off-Peak Pass program aligns with the integrated service model recommended in **Section 5.2** and increases trip availability on Specialized Transit. As LTC moves forward with integrated service delivery, LTC should give consideration as to whether the Off-Peak Pass program would apply for integrated trips. This would mean that the Specialized portion of an Integrated Trip would also be free but would only be apply if the passenger transferred to or from a conventional transit route. With smart-cards being installed on all Specialized Transit vehicles, LTC would have the ability to link the Off-Peak Pass to the smart-card and allow integrated trips that are made during off-peak hours to be free. This will further encourage the use of integrated trips over Specialized Trips. The ability to monitor use to ensure that it achieves broader system-wide objectives would need to be carefully reviewed first before moving in this direction.

#### Recommendations

It is recommended that London Transit:

- Continue to monitor the use and value of the Off-Peak Pass as overcrowding is addressed on the conventional transit service and as the application process is updated to allow London Transit to better understand conditional eligibility.
- Tie the Off-Peak Pass to the smart-card and consider opening its use up for integrated trips once Step 5 of the integrated service model is established (see **Section 4.2.3**).

#### 5.4.2 Workshop Shuttle

Workshop and medical shuttle services are not currently utilized for service delivery. Results from the medical shuttle pilot program indicated it was less efficient than fitting medical trips into the regular service. This was primarily due to the manner in which medial appointments occur, often varying significantly from their scheduled time, making it difficult to schedule pick up times for customers. As a result, the medial shuttle pilot program was cancelled. As most workshops have not resumed post-pandemic, the Workshop Shuttle service has not been re-implemented post-pandemic.

In the timeline of the upcoming Service Plan, it is recommended that LTC consider the utilization of the shuttle service concept for group rides with a single origin or destination, which could include workshops, adult day programs, and sporting events. Echoing the suggestion in the CUTA Specialized Transit Services Industry Practices report, the group shuttle operation could increase service efficiency and free up space on Specialized Transit to accommodate more trip requests.

#### Recommendations

It is recommended that London Transit:

- Identify opportunities to reinstate 'group' shuttles to destinations with a single event/start time such as workshops, adult day programs or sporting events.

## 6.0

## Resource Plan

The five-year plan includes an expansion of revenue service hours for London Transit to continue to grow the service to account for population growth, an aging population and minimize unaccommodated trips within the Trip Booking Window. **Table 6** below illustrates the approved service expansion hours for London Transit Specialized Transit Service. It should be noted that vehicles for Specialized Transit are provided by a contracted operator and are not included in this financial plan.

**Table 6: Approved Service Hour Growth for London Transit Specialized Service**

Year	Additional Service Hours	Total Service Hours
2024	10,000 annual (4,300 implemented)	173,100
2025	10,000 annual plus 5,700 flow through)	188,800
2026	10,000	198,800
2027	8,000	206,800
2028	TBD	206,800
2029	TBD	206,800
<b>Total</b>	<b>48,000</b>	<b>206,800</b>

As noted in **Section 2.4.3**, peak service consists of 49 to 50 vehicles. Based on existing revenue vehicle hours, it can be assumed that each new vehicle would operate approximately 2,700 annual service hours.

Based on the summary in **Section 2.4.3** and discussions with London Transit staff, some of busiest times of the day that would use capacity are on weekdays between 8:00 am and 6:00 pm, and on weekends in the morning on Saturdays and in the early afternoon on Sundays.

Based on this, it is recommended that the 2025 revenue vehicles hours be focused on weekdays between 8:00 am and 6:00 pm (resulting in three additional peak buses).

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It is more difficult to forecast where future service hours between 2026 and 2029 should be implemented, particularly as London Transit updates its application process and moves towards an integrated service delivery model. Instead of prescribing where service hours should be allocated on a regular basis, it is recommended that London Transit continue to monitor performance of the service and prioritize the addition of service hours based on periods of the day or days of the week that:

- Receive the highest unaccommodated trip requests;
- Experience on-time performance issues (vehicles not arriving within designated pick-up window); and/or
- Have very low ridesharing and deadheading (which could be due to vehicles having to travel long-distances between passenger drop-off and pick-up areas as there are few vehicles in the network).

In addition to the service hour improvements, London Transit will need to accommodate for additional costs and staff resources to implement a number of the improvements identified in this plan. This will include:

- Application Form: Update the application form to make the modifications suggested in the **Section 4.3.1** of this plan;
- Recertification: Begin the recertification process of existing registrants as recommended in **Section 4.3.4** (in many cases this can be completed by staff on modified duty and spread over time);
- Integrated Service Model: Take steps that move towards an integrated service model. This includes:
  - Updated policies and procedures (can be completed internally by staff or contracted to a consultant firm depending on staff availability);
  - Develop and implement a travel training program, including the development of materials, and additional staff required for one-on-one or group training; and
  - Upgrade certain stops that require Specialized Transit vehicles to dwell while waiting for the connection (this requires further review).

## Appendix A

### *Accessibility Plan Initiatives and Feedback from Accessible Public Transit Service Advisory Committee*

**Table A-1: Status of Accessibility Plan Work Plan Initiatives**

<b>Work Plan Initiative</b>	<b>Status and Action</b>
<b>Amendments to the Corporate Website</b>	Completed.
<b>Consider Additional Methods of Communication Re: Policies</b>	LTC went to the APTSAC in 2023 to survey them on the level of knowledge of policies and where to find them. This is included in the 2024 program.
<b>Smart Card Readers on Specialized Vehicles</b>	LTC has already started this process and it is anticipated to be completed within the Spring of 2024. No additional action is required for the Specialized Transit Service Plan.
<b>Assess Impacts of a Shorter Booking Window</b>	This was also identified as part of the Voice of the Passenger Survey. A review of best practices and a recommendation on the booking window will be completed as part of the Service Plan.
<b>Assess Impacts/ Opportunities of Online Trip Booking</b>	LTC is already looking into this and this will be in place with new software that is being procured. No action required as part of the Specialized Transit Service Plan.
<b>Undertake Assessment of Highest periods of Non-Accommodated Trips</b>	This is completed annually. This data was reviewed as part of Specialized Transit Service Plan to identify any areas to increase resources.
<b>Integrated Services</b>	The plan identified the opportunity to implement an integrated service delivery model between Specialized and conventional transit. This is a key area of focus that will be assessed as part of the Specialized Transit Service Plan.

