

Lanark County & Town of Smiths Falls Rural Transit Feasibility Study

Final Report

December 4th 2025



Lanark & Smiths Falls Rural Transit Feasibility Study

Final Report

December 4th 2025

Prepared By:

Arcadis Professional Services (Canada) Inc.
55 St. Clair Avenue West, 7th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M4V 2Y7
Canada
Phone: 416 596 1930

Prepared For:

Kurt Greaves
Chief Administrative Officer
Corporation of the County of Lanark
99 Christie Lake Road
Perth, Ontario K7H 3C6

Our Ref:

30279789



Mary-Lou Johnston
Business Unit Director, Mobility Advisory Ontario

This document is intended only for the use of the individual or entity for which it was prepared and may contain information that is privileged, confidential and exempt from disclosure under applicable law. Any dissemination, distribution or copying of this document is strictly prohibited.

Contents

- Executive Summary..... ES-1**
- 1 Introduction 1**
 - 1.1 Background..... 1**
 - 1.2 Study Area 1**
 - 1.3 Objectives 3**
- 2 Existing Conditions Review 4**
 - 2.1 Contextual Review..... 4**
 - 2.2 Policy Review..... 6**
 - 2.3 Demographic and Equity Analysis..... 8**
 - 2.4 Travel Demand Analysis 13**
 - 2.5 Best Practices Review 23**
 - 2.6 Stakeholder and Public Engagement: Phase 1 25**
 - 2.7 Summary of Challenges & Opportunities..... 26**
- 3 Transit Solutions Planning..... 28**
 - 3.1 Transit Service Types 28**
 - 3.2 Recommended Service Model..... 34**
 - 3.3 Stakeholder and Public Engagement: Phase 2..... 36**
 - 3.4 Transit Demand Forecasting 36**
 - 3.5 Recommended Service Concept..... 37**
- 4 Transit Operation and Governance 41**
 - 4.1 Service Integration Planning 41**
 - 4.2 Funding and Partnerships 42**
 - 4.3 Legislative Requirements 44**
 - 4.4 Financial Planning..... 46**
 - 4.5 Implementation Planning..... 49**
- 5 Future Considerations..... 54**
 - 5.1 Fixed Route Expansion..... 54**

5.2 Long-Distance Regional Service..... 61

5.3 Zero-Emissions Vehicles 63

6 Conclusion 64

Exhibits

Exhibit 1-1: Study Area 2

Exhibit 2-1: Population of Lower-Tier Municipalities..... 9

Exhibit 2-2: Age Segmentation of Population by Municipality 10

Exhibit 2-3: Distribution of Median Household Income by Municipality..... 11

Exhibit 2-4: Prevalence of Socioeconomic Equity Factors by Municipality 12

Exhibit 2-5: Volume of Trips Around the Study Area 15

Exhibit 2-6: Volume of External Trips from the Study Area 17

Exhibit 2-7: Trip Generators in Carleton Place 19

Exhibit 2-8: Trip Generators in Almonte 20

Exhibit 2-9: Trip Generators in Perth 21

Exhibit 2-10: Trip Generators in Smiths Falls 22

Exhibit 3-1: OC Transpo Transit Bus 29

Exhibit 3-2: Edmonton Transit On-Demand Bus..... 31

Exhibit 3-3: Specialized Transit Vehicle with Wheelchair Lift in Brooklyn, NY 33

Exhibit 3-4: On-Demand Transit Operating Models 35

Exhibit 4-1: Estimated Operating Budget for Option 1 (Existing Fare Structure, \$ in thousands) 47

Exhibit 4-2: Estimated Operating Budget for Option 2 (Zone-Based Fare Structure, \$ in thousands) 48

Exhibit 4-3: Estimated Capital Budget (\$ in thousands) 49

Exhibit 5-1: Potential Carleton Place In-Town Fixed Route 55

Exhibit 5-2: Potential Smiths Falls In-Town Fixed Route 57

Exhibit 5-3: Potential Perth In-Town Fixed Route 59

Exhibit 5-4: Potential Almonte In-Town Fixed Route..... 60

Executive Summary

Introduction and Background

Many rural and smaller communities today are experiencing a lack of consistent and efficient public transit options, making it difficult for residents to access essential services, employment, and education. This report studies the feasibility of public transit for Lanark County and the Town of Smiths Falls and provides guidance and recommendations for the development and implementation of a rural public transit service that will enhance mobility options for residents.

The study examines the unique travel needs of the community, reviewing the current transportation options available to residents. A detailed evaluation of existing transportation services was conducted to assess the adequacy, accessibility, and efficiency of current travel options for residents. The review identified gaps and challenges that needed to be addressed to move forward with the development of transit planning solutions.

Notable transportation challenges include limited transportation options, residents without access to a personal vehicle, an aging population, dispersed travel patterns, and the discontinuation of intercity bus services which drive barriers to employment, healthcare, and other essential services. Travel options are limited to private, nonprofit, and intercity carriers with restricted schedules and coverage.

Public and Stakeholder Engagement

Two rounds of public and stakeholder engagement were conducted to gather diverse perspectives, insights, and local knowledge to enhance the quality and relevance of the study's outcomes. Outreach activities consisted of a public survey, three public pop-up sessions, and one stakeholder workshop.

Accessibility was a major concern raised by stakeholders and community members, as it was commonly observed that any public transportation system in Lanark and Smiths Falls should minimize barriers to potential users and be as accessible as possible. Those who supported transit cited aging in place as a major factor, as improved transportation services could allow seniors to remain in their homes for a longer time even if they age out of driving. Throughout the study area, jobs and services vary considerably from one community to another and respondents emphasized the importance of being able to connect between multiple communities. Financial sustainability and cost control were very important to stakeholders and respondents, whether they supported or opposed the introduction of transit. A recurring theme in the study from both stakeholders and members of the community was the idea of starting smaller with a transportation service before later scaling up to something more substantial if it's warranted by ridership numbers or by community requests.

Best Practices Review

Several rural communities in Ontario are successfully operating rural public transit services to support community mobility. The study benchmarked communities similar in size to Lanark County and Smiths Falls to provide comprehensive insights and practical comparisons, leading to informed decision-making and optimized service design tailored to rural communities. Systems reviewed included NG Transit in North Grenville, Brant Transit in Brant County, Ride Norfolk in Norfolk County, and Muskoka Community Transit in the District of Muskoka. For both vehicle operations and enabling technologies, rural community systems generally contract out their operations. Conventional fixed transit routes require corridors of higher demand, like Highway 11 in Muskoka, with major communities acting as “anchor” points. For large areas with low population density and dispersed travel demand, on-demand transit is more commonly used. Fares for both conventional and on-demand systems can be flat rates or zone-based fares. Flat rates reduce long-distance costs for riders and ensure everyone pays the same, while zone-based fares can offset high operating costs for long travel distances but may be more expensive for users. Flat rates are more common in more compact service areas with major central hubs like Brant County.

Transit Service Planning and Analysis

The transit service planning analysis studied Lanark County and Smiths Falls to understand the intricacies of local travel demand and trip generators. By thoroughly examining current travel patterns, including travel trends and peak times, it allowed for a targeted plan to support community travel needs effectively. This strategic analysis enabled us to pinpoint specific community areas and needs, ensuring they align better with residents demands.

Recommended Transit Service

Through a comprehensive process combining a review of demographic and travel demand information, active stakeholder and public engagement, and examination of best practices, an **on-demand transit service** is the recommended service model for Lanark County and Smiths Falls. This service model serves dispersed travel patterns across vast areas more effectively and affordably than a network of routes, enabling more complete coverage across rural and remote areas like much of Lanark County. Riders can choose between multiple directions of travel, which benefits communities that do not have a clearly defined travel pattern. For seniors or others with reduced mobility, on-demand enables door-to-door service coverage. The trip booking and dispatching software used by on-demand service providers will also enable more detailed ridership data collection, allowing Lanark County and Smiths Falls to track demand patterns to monitor the performance of the service and identify possible ideas for future service expansion.

The recommended service operator for on-demand transit in Lanark and Smiths Falls is **Lanark Transportation**. This maintains and makes use of Lanark Transportation's established experience operating transportation service in the community over many years and leveraging their preexisting fleet of vehicles. It minimizes the potential duplication between two or more different service providers and allows the existing service to be expanded for the benefit of the service operator and the existing user base. Efficiency of the existing service and vehicle fleet can be improved, existing capital assets can be maximized, and the introduction of new booking methods can enable users to access the service more easily. This approach to leverage existing knowledge and infrastructure, expanding service availability for the minimal possible additional cost is aligned with industry guidelines and best practices.

The proposed on-demand service operated by Lanark Transportation is recommended to maintain a door-to-door service model due to the impracticality of curb-to-curb or stop-to-stop service in rural areas. Saturday service would be introduced, with service operating from 6:00a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on weekdays and 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Saturdays. Riders would book their trips at least a day in advance to guarantee a spot. Same-day bookings could be accepted for consideration but would not be guaranteed if they could not fit within a day's vehicle schedule.

Fares and Financial Considerations

Two options have provided for Lanark's consideration with respect to fares: 1) A distance-based zone fare structure (consisting of \$6, \$15, and \$25 trips) which would enhance affordability for riders and bring fares within range of peers but would require a higher municipal operating subsidy. 2) Retention of Lanark Transportation's existing fares to maintain financial continuity.

Annual ridership for the service is anticipated to range from 25,000 to 31,000 riders in its first full year. Total annual operating costs for Lanark Transportation range from \$1.7M to \$2.2M over the first 4 years of service. Under the distance-based fare structure, the costs can be offset by annual revenue between \$854,000 to \$964,000, resulting in an annual **net municipal operating cost** of \$855,000 to \$1.2M. By comparison, retaining existing fares results in anticipated annual revenue between \$1.4M to \$1.6M, resulting in an annual **net municipal operating cost** of \$351,000 to \$581,000.

Assuming a vehicle lifecycle of 8 years, annual capital costs, combining fleet replacement and software costs, are anticipated to be \$258,000, with an additional purchase of growth fleet in Year 1 for \$300,000.

To offset capital and operating costs, it is recommended to leverage existing provincial and federal grants including Gas Tax, the Ontario Transit Investment Fund, and the Rural Transit

Solutions Fund. The on-demand service should maintain robust performance monitoring (ridership, cost, equity indicators) to ensure it is continuing to function as it should and meeting the community's needs. Compliance with relevant regulations including the AODA, privacy laws around data collection, and Canadian content for fleet procurement will need to be maintained.

Conclusion

Expanding public transportation services in Lanark and Smiths Falls is feasible and has the potential to be effective in addressing the community's unmet travel needs. By partnering with Lanark Transportation to enhance the existing Lanark Transportation service into a technologically enabled on-demand transit system, the community can make the most of existing knowledge and assets to expand transit access for a limited additional cost compared to establishing a new system. The wealth of data generated by on-demand transit will enable Lanark and Smiths Falls to monitor the system's demand and performance, with the potential to consider conventional or regional transit as a supplement to on-demand service in the future. This enhancement of an important community-based service will ensure the viability and sustainability of expanded transit access in Lanark and Smiths Falls.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Lanark County and the Town of Smiths Falls are exploring the feasibility of introducing new rural transit and transportation services. Like many rural communities across Ontario, Lanark County and Smiths Falls have limited transportation options for residents travelling between communities, especially following the discontinuation of intercity bus services like Voyageur and Greyhound. For residents who cannot drive or do not own a vehicle, accessing employment, healthcare, shopping, or other essential services outside of their home communities can be challenging.

This transportation gap has been recognized by the federal and provincial governments, which have introduced grants and funding programs for rural transportation. Lanark Rural Transportation Working Group has also provided presentations to County and Town Councils on how regional public transit could address some of the community's transportation gaps. The purpose of this project is to evaluate the feasibility for rural transportation services in the County and the Town, considering nuanced local conditions, anticipated demand, financial and operational trade-offs, and emerging best practices of the transit and transportation industry.

1.2 Study Area

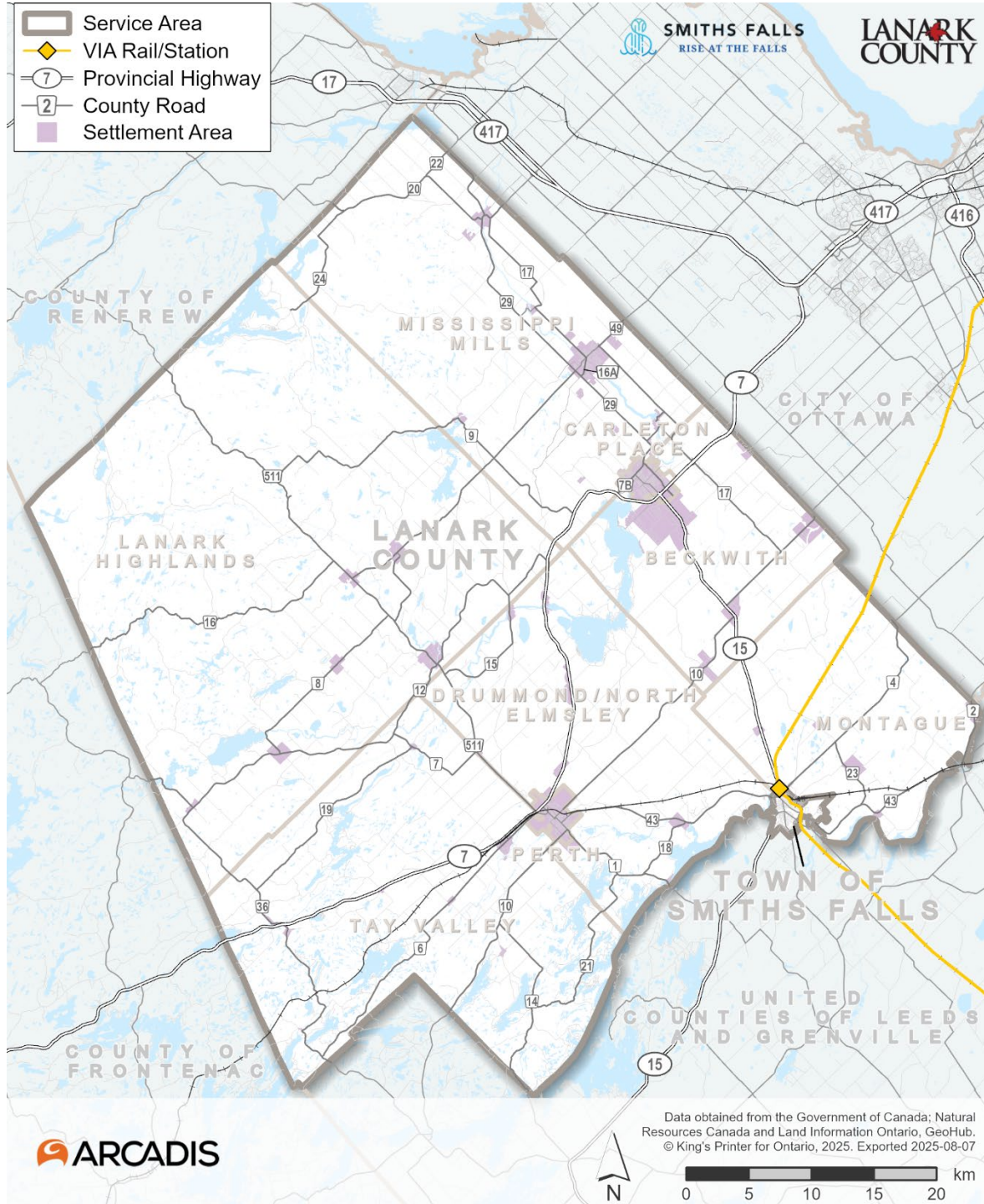
The study area for this project corresponds to the boundaries of the County of Lanark and the Town of Smiths Falls, which is administratively independent from the County. All lower-tier municipalities in the County are included in the study area, including:

- Township of Lanark Highlands
- Township of Tay Valley
- Town of Perth
- Township of Drummond/North Elmsley
- Town of Mississippi Mills
- Town of Carleton Place
- Township of Beckwith
- Township of Montague

An overview of the study area is provided in 1-1: Study Area.

Lanark & Smiths Falls Rural Transit Feasibility Study

Exhibit 1-1: Study Area



1.3 Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to assess the feasibility of establishing a rural public transportation system for Lanark County and Smiths Falls and to provide a resource and roadmap for effective decision-making regarding future transit service. To meet this objective, this report includes the following:

- A review of transportation needs and priorities in Lanark County and Smiths Falls;
- An examination of transit operating models and their suitability for implementation in the community;
- A plan to initiate rural transportation service; and
- Recommendations for the County and the Town to take towards implementation.

2 Existing Conditions Review

This section reviews the current state of transportation in Lanark County and Smiths Falls, provides an overview of the community's characteristics, and investigates the overall travel needs of the study area to better understand how rural public transit could benefit the community in the future.

2.1 Contextual Review

Currently, there is no public transit service in Lanark County or Smiths Falls. Transportation services in the County and Town are provided by private companies and nonprofit organizations. Residents have identified a lack of public transit as a barrier to travel where and when they want, as existing services provide a limited number of options in terms of the time, direction, origin, destination, and user cost. This section examines the existing transportation service providers in Lanark County and Smiths Falls to provide a picture of the options currently available to residents and any gaps that may exist.

2.1.1 Lanark Transportation (LT)

Lanark Transportation (LT) is a community-based not-for-profit organization that provides door-to-door transportation services to residents, enabling members of the community to connect to medical appointments, day programs, counseling services, social service appointments, food programs, and other critical trips. Non-emergency medical transportation to bring residents home from hospitals is also provided. Many existing clients of LT are senior citizens or recipients of assistance from the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) or Ontario Works (OW). Clients book trips by calling the LT office or by submitting a booking form online. Fares are distance-based and communicated to clients when their trip has been confirmed by LT staff. LT endeavours to accommodate last-minute trip requests where possible but recommends clients book their trips in advance to ensure they can be accommodated. LT's fleet consists of 20 vehicles, most of which are minivans. Four minivans are outfitted with wheelchair lifts, two of which are hydraulic lifts to accommodate motorized wheelchairs. One accessible nine-passenger shuttle bus is also available.

Lanark Transportation recently launched a limited scheduled service known as Ride the LT, which transports clients to or around key destinations in settlement areas using the accessible shuttle bus. Different communities are served on different days of the week. Fares, unlike LT's door-to-door service, are fixed. LT currently operates the following Ride the LT shuttle services:

- Lanark Highlands (\$4/person round trip):
 - Route 1: To Carleton Place (1st Tuesday of the month)
 - Route 2: To Perth (3rd Tuesday of the month)
- Carleton Place to Local Shopping and Activities (\$2/person round trip) – Every Wednesday
- Mississippi Mills (\$2/person round trip):
 - Route 1: To Almonte (1st and 3rd Thursday of the month)
 - Route 2: To Carleton Place (2nd and 4th Thursday of the month)
- Perth to Local Shopping and Activities (\$4/person round trip) – Every Friday

Riders must pre-register by 10 a.m. one day before service. Riders may request to be picked up at their doorstep from the shuttle prior to the start of the scheduled route and dropped off at their doorstep after the end of the scheduled route.

2.1.2 Flixbus and Rider Express

Flixbus and Rider Express are privately owned, intercity bus service operators. Since the discontinuation of older, established service providers like Greyhound and Voyageur, these companies have become the primary bus carriers in Ontario. Flixbus and Rider Express operate stops at two locations in Lanark County: Perth and Carleton Place. Carriers of this type generally operate routes between major cities, which provide “anchor” points of higher demand. Service in Perth and Carleton Place is provided by routes oriented along Highway 7 between Toronto and Ottawa. Within Lanark County, residents could use these providers to travel between Perth and Carleton Place, from either community to Ottawa, or to destinations further west including Madoc, Peterborough, and Toronto. Other travel within the County, or travel to multiple destinations within Perth or Carleton Place, would not be possible using these providers.

On a typical weekday, Flixbus operates two trips between Perth and Carleton Place while Rider Express operates one trip. User fares are based on distance; a typical adult fare between Perth and Carleton Place ranges from \$20 to \$40 depending on how far in advance riders book their trips. Same-day round-trip travel on private intercity buses is possible, but not very common given higher costs and relatively limited departure volumes per day. These buses are more typically used by customers to travel over the course of more than a day.

2.1.3 Via Rail

Via Rail, the national passenger railway service provider of Canada, operates a station in Smiths Falls on its Toronto-Ottawa route. Riders in Smiths Falls can travel east to Ottawa or west to destinations like Brockville, Kingston, Cobourg, Port Hope, and Toronto. No other stations exist in Lanark County, and travel by Via Rail is typically centred around longer-

distance trips. Fares are based around the distance of a trip, the level of demand on a given day, and how far in advance riders book their trips; a typical one-way adult fare from Smiths Falls to Ottawa is around \$20, while travel to Kingston can cost between \$27 and \$37 provided it is booked far enough in advance.

Smiths Falls is served by five trains per day on a typical weekday, which represents the highest frequency of any scheduled transportation service in the study area. Via Rail is generally not used for same-day travel, but such a trip is feasible given the number of trains per day. Notably, the earliest train from Smiths Falls to Ottawa arrives at 11:21AM, rendering it impractical for most commuter trips. Riders travelling to Kingston could arrive at 6:16AM or 7:25AM, making periodic commuter trips possible (though, still limited by user cost).

2.1.4 OC Transpo

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, OC Transpo operated commuter-oriented Regional Partner services to destinations in Lanark County including Carleton Place, Perth, and Mississippi Mills. Regional Partner services to Lanark County were provided by Classic Alliance Motorcoach, a company specializing in charter bus services. These bus routes were primarily aligned to work-based trips, operating just one trip per day in each direction during the morning and evening rush hours. Service on Routes 502 and 503 to Perth and Almonte was suspended in late March 2020, while service on Route 538 to Carleton Place was suspended in late October of that same year. Service on these routes has not yet returned since being suspended five years ago.

Classic Alliance Motorcoach is still operating as a charter bus company based out of Carleton Place. Customers of Classic Alliance can book a charter bus for any group trip. The westernmost extent of OC Transpo's regular service network, which is the geographically closest point to Lanark County, is in Stittsville and Kanata. The closest major transit terminal to Lanark County is Terry Fox, which is located at a shopping centre near the interchange of Kanata Avenue and Highway 417.

2.2 Policy Review

A review of local policies and initiatives was conducted to understand the context for pursuing public transportation service in Lanark County and Smiths Falls. The purpose of this review is to align potential service recommendations with local strategic priorities and build on the work done in previous studies.

2.2.1 Lanark County Sustainable Communities Official Plan (2012)

As part of the Lanark County Sustainable Communities Official Plan (SCOP), the county, in partnership with local community members, developed the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP). The ICSP aims to achieve sustainable through four pillars: environment, economy, social values and cultural values. Some key objectives of the Plan include promoting efficient land use, protecting natural heritage, strengthening the economy, providing diverse housing options and preserving the unique character and heritage of the County for future generations. Specifically, Theme 16 focuses on transportation, part of which is the continued support of Lanark Transportation and the investigation into the development of a public transportation option.

2.2.2 Town of Smiths Falls Official Plan (2014)

The Town of Smiths Falls Official Plan centres on promoting sustainable development, economic growth and environmental protection while preserving the Town's cultural and heritage. The Plan aims to direct growth to designated areas, increase affordable housing options and foster economic development through tourism and local industries. The Plan also focus on pursuing a balanced transportation system, built for bicyclists and pedestrians as well as vehicles like automobiles, trucks, and buses.

2.2.3 County of Lanark Transportation Master Plan (2010)

The County of Lanark Transportation Master Plan (TMP) highlights growing commuter travel to Ottawa, reliance on private vehicles, rural connectivity challenges and seasonal tourism-related demand and emphasizes the need for expanded transit services. A significant portion of travel demand in Lanark County is driven by commuters traveling to Ottawa for work, with Carleton Place and Almonte acting as key commuter hubs. Growth is concentrated in the eastern and southern parts of the County, driven by proximity to Ottawa and improvements to Highway 7. A key strategy in the TMP is managing transportation demand. This strategy looks to reduce the use of the road network through approaches like active transportation and ridesharing. While transit is not listed among the core strategies, it is noted as something local municipalities in Lanark County should assess, and it is included as an alternative transportation strategy.

2.2.4 Lanark County Climate Action Plan (2023)

Lanark County Climate Action Plan aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build resilience to climate change by promoting sustainable practices, protecting natural

ecosystems, and transitioning to low-carbon solutions across communities. Goal 1.5 of the Action Plan calls for the reduction of single occupant vehicle trips by providing local transit solutions. Specifically, the recommended approach is to “adopt innovative public transit systems” to serve the rural community.

The Town of Smiths Falls is in the process of developing Climate Action Plan, a multi-year strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This plan is being developed with the help of the Climate Protection Working Group (CPWG).

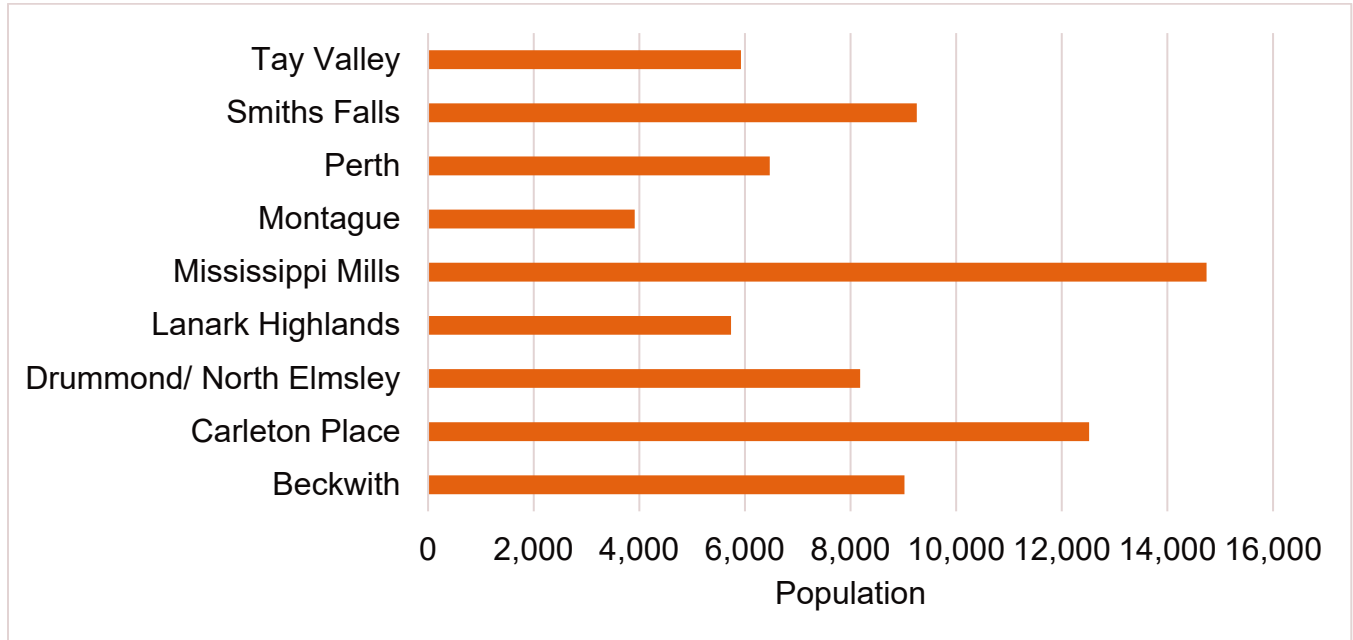
2.3 Demographic and Equity Analysis

According to the 2021 StatsCan Census of Population, Lanark County and Smiths Falls had a combined population of 75,760, while the County now estimates a population of just over 77,500 as of 2024. According to the County’s Growth Management Strategy of that same year, the population is expected to grow further to a figure between 98,300 and 114,500 by the year 2051 (these numbers exclusive of Smiths Falls). Population and employment growth is expected to take place primarily in the urban centres of Carleton Place, Mississippi Mills, and Perth, while rural municipalities are expected to experience steadier and more modest growth.

2.3.1 Population and Age

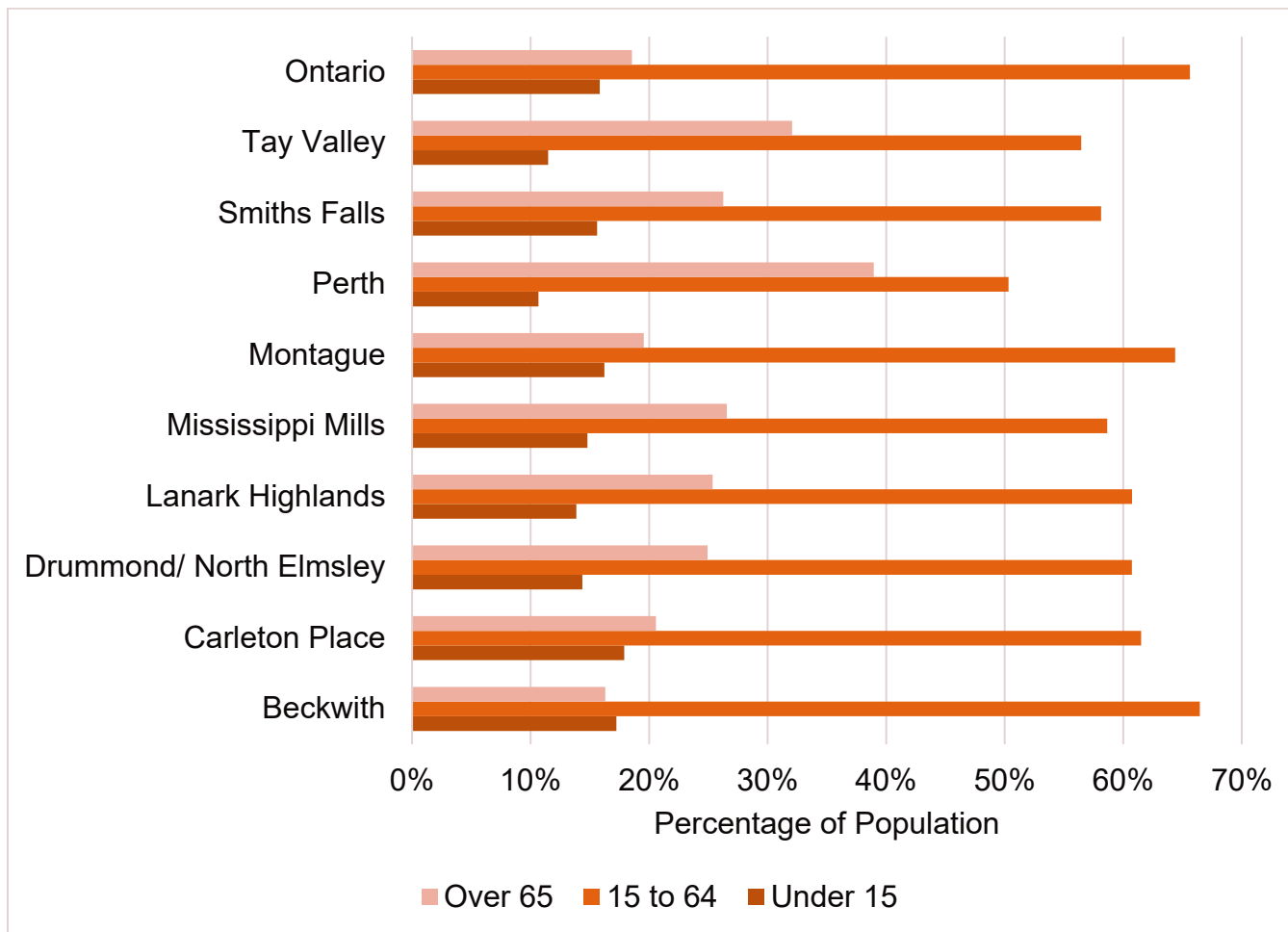
The population of Lanark and Smiths Falls is distributed across the four largest settlement areas of Carleton Place, Smiths Falls, Almonte, and Perth and the five rural municipalities of Beckwith, Montague, Drummond/North Elmsley, Lanark Highlands, and Tay Valley. Mississippi Mills, an urban and rural municipality that includes the town core of Almonte, is the most populated municipality in the study area with 14,740 residents as of 2021. Unlike some other jurisdictions around Ontario and across Canada, there is no clearly dominant centre of population and employment activity in Lanark County. This pattern is reflected in the travel demand, with each community having its own unique needs and characteristics. More on this is explored in Section 2.4. The population of each lower-tier municipality is compared in Exhibit 2-1.

Exhibit 2-1: Population of Lower-Tier Municipalities



The demographic breakdown of each municipality by age was examined against the provincial average, as illustrated in Exhibit 2-2. Lanark County and Smiths Falls have a generally older population compared to the Ontario average. Beckwith, at 16.3%, is the lone municipality in the study area whose share of seniors (age 65+) is below the provincial average. Two municipalities, Tay Valley (32.1%) and Perth (39%) have senior populations that exceed 30%. Most communities across the study area have above-average senior populations and below-average working age (15-64) and youth (under 15) populations. Three municipalities in the study area, Carleton Place (17.9%), Beckwith (17.2%), and Montague (16.2%), have youth populations over the provincial average of 15.8%.

Exhibit 2-2: Age Segmentation of Population by Municipality



2.3.2 Income and Social Equity

In the context of assessing the feasibility of rural public transportation, the purpose of reviewing income and social equity data is to better understand where equity-deserving population groups (such as seniors, low-income residents, single-parent households, or visible minority populations) live within the study area to design a service that could meet their needs. It is important to understand which populations could benefit more significantly from rural transit or may be more likely to use it, and where they are located. For example, future services could connect disadvantaged communities to expanded job opportunities, important social services, or critical medical treatment.

Exhibit 2-3 shows how median household incomes are distributed across the study area. Three municipalities fall noticeably below the provincial average of \$91,000: Lanark Highlands (\$81,000), Perth (\$63,200), and Smiths Falls (\$61,200). Carleton Place and Tay Valley are

very close to the provincial average, while Beckwith, Drummond/North Elmsley, Mississippi Mills, and Montague are above it. At \$126,000 per year, Beckwith has the highest median household income in the study area.

Exhibit 2-3: Distribution of Median Household Income by Municipality

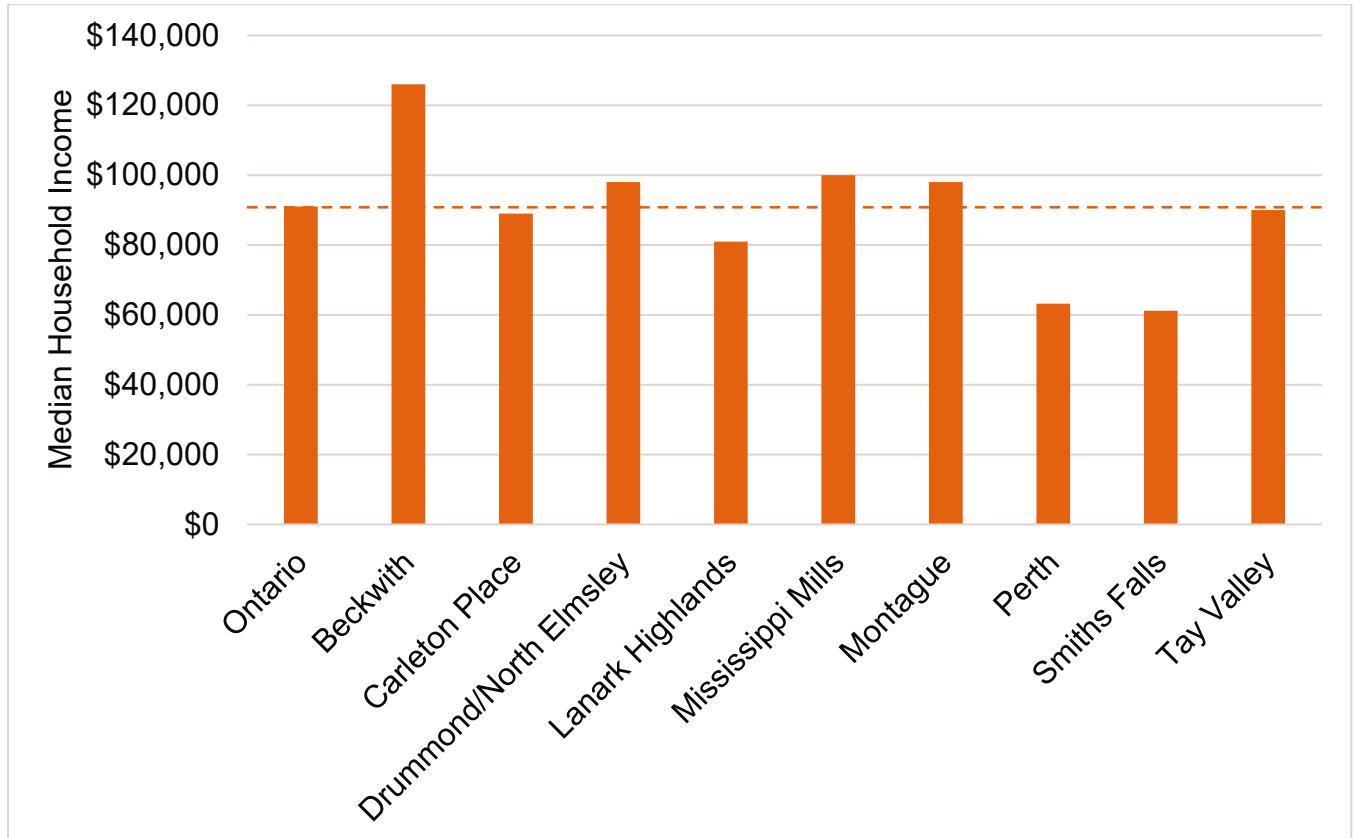


Exhibit 2-4 compares the rates of socioeconomic equity factors including low-income households, single-parent households, visible minorities, recent immigrants, and the unemployment rate for each municipality in the study area against the provincial average. Generally, most municipalities in the study area were below the provincial average for most social equity factors. This can be partially explained by the tendency for equity-deserving groups to settle in larger urban areas with a greater concentration of social services and cultural communities. This does not universally apply across the study area for all municipalities or all factors. Several communities have higher-than-average rates of low-income and single-parent households and, as noted in Section 2.3.1, most communities across the study area have a higher prevalence of seniors than the rest of Ontario.

Exhibit 2-4: Prevalence of Socioeconomic Equity Factors by Municipality

	Low-Income Households	Single-Parent Households	Visible Minorities	Recent Immigrants	Unemployment Rate
Ontario	10.0%	12.2%	33.9%	7.4%	12.2%
Beckwith	3.2%	5.2%	3.5%	0.9%	6.4%
Carleton Place	7.0%	13.5%	6.5%	1.7%	7.8%
Drummond/ North Elmsley	6.1%	8.1%	1.9%	0.5%	7.2%
Lanark Highlands	11.9%	8.6%	0.7%	1.0%	9.1%
Mississippi Mills	6.1%	8.5%	2.9%	1.4%	7.6%
Montague	7.8%	10.5%	2.3%	0.3%	7.8%
Perth	13.4%	13.8%	2.4%	0.7%	12.9%
Smiths Falls	16.1%	17.8%	4.1%	0.8%	10.1%
Tay Valley	8.7%	6.4%	1.0%	0.0%	11.0%

Values above the provincial average are shaded in orange, while values above the study area average (but not the provincial average) are shaded in yellow.

Comparing municipalities within the study area, Perth and Smiths Falls exhibit the highest prevalence of social equity factors, particularly low-income households, single-parent households, and unemployment rate. Carleton Place is the most culturally diverse community in the study area, exhibiting above-average rates of visible minority and recent immigrant populations, as well as a higher rate of single-parent households. Among rural municipalities, Lanark Highlands and Tay Valley have above-average low-income populations and unemployment rates, suggesting that the rate of rural poverty is higher in those communities than in other rural municipalities across Lanark.

2.3.3 Key Findings

The study area is composed of nine municipalities with their own unique demographics and needs. Some key findings include:

- The population is distributed across the study area, with population density generally being lower in the north and west of the County.
- The study area has four distinct major settlement areas, with no clearly dominant centre of activity.
- The study area's population is generally older than the provincial average, except in Beckwith, whose population generally trends younger.
- Perth and Smiths Falls have the highest observed equity need overall.
- Lanark Highlands and Tay Valley have the highest observed equity need among rural communities.

2.4 Travel Demand Analysis

To develop a rural public transit service that meets the needs of the community, a review of existing travel patterns can reveal where residents want to go and how their demand is distributed. A successful rural transit service can fill travel “gaps” for members of the community who are not able to make the trips they want to due to existing travel barriers.

2.4.1 Internal Travel Demand

To determine travel patterns between municipalities around the study area, the 2021 Census ‘Journey to Work’ data was used. The dataset indicates each respondent’s commuting origin and destination to establish how many trips are made within and between municipalities. While this data does not account for trips taken outside of work, it is a reasonable proxy to determine travel demand as jobs tend to be concentrated in similar locations as shopping, healthcare, education, and other major destinations that members of the community would want to reach.

Exhibit 2-5 outlines travel patterns observed from the commuting data. The findings show, as established in earlier sections, that there is no clear dominant travel pattern or destination for the whole County. The four major settlement areas of Smiths Falls, Perth, Mississippi Mills, and Carleton Place all show up as prominent destinations for urban and rural communities alike, with several communities showing strong travel patterns towards multiple settlements. Travel demand is particularly dispersed in Lanark Highlands and Beckwith. In urban communities, internal trips are the most common, as workers often prefer to find jobs closer to home. Communities with high levels of external travel demand, like Mississippi Mills and

Lanark & Smiths Falls Rural Transit Feasibility Study

Carleton Place, have lower-than-expected travel volumes relative to their population. This is explored in the next section.

Lanark & Smiths Falls Rural Transit Feasibility Study

Exhibit 2-5: Volume of Trips Around the Study Area

From/To	Tay Valley	Smiths Falls	Perth	Montague	Mississippi Mills	Lanark Highlands	Drummond/North Elmsley	Carleton Place	Beckwith	Total
Tay Valley	65	115	980	15	0	30	25	20	0	1,250
Smiths Falls	15	1,560	165	20	20	10	15	70	15	1,890
Perth	10	125	965	0	10	25	35	50	15	1,235
Montague	0	425	60	55	30	0	15	85	25	695
Mississippi Mills	0	35	50	0	1,250	15	0	410	55	1,815
Lanark Highlands	15	30	335	0	105	155	15	135	15	805
Drummond/North Elmsley	20	420	985	0	40	45	95	220	25	1,850
Carleton Place	0	85	70	0	230	15	10	1,460	45	1,915
Beckwith	0	145	110	10	105	0	0	670	185	1,225

The most popular destination from each municipality is shaded in orange, while other prominent destinations exceeding 100 trips are shaded in yellow.

Data source: 2021 Federal Census

2.4.2 External Travel Demand

The same 'Journey to Work' travel dataset was also used to analyze trips external to the service area. Compared to the data reviewing internal trips, this data is less indicative of overall travel patterns. Observed travel patterns from other jurisdictions suggest that people are generally more willing to travel further for work than they are for other purposes such as shopping, recreation, social events, and medical trips, particularly if they are only able to find jobs further away from their homes. This dataset is still a useful way to illustrate prominent destinations outside of Lanark County, but it comes with the caveat that excessive weight should not be put into overall trip volumes as it analyzes only one type of trip.

Exhibit 2-6 shows commuting travel patterns to destinations outside of Lanark and Smiths Falls. Due to its large overall size and number of jobs, the city of Ottawa is the most significant external destination for every municipality in the study area. In Mississippi Mills, Carleton Place, and Beckwith, the volume of commuter trips to Ottawa exceeds that of any internal destination. These communities are located closest to the boundary between Lanark and Ottawa and have high volumes of external trips. In other communities across the study area, travel to Ottawa is significant but is exceeded by an internal destination like Perth or Smiths Falls. Some other communities near the study area's boundary show prominent travel patterns to other counties, like Smiths Falls to Leeds & Grenville or Mississippi Mills to Renfrew.

Lanark & Smiths Falls Rural Transit Feasibility Study
 Exhibit 2-6: Volume of External Trips from the Study Area

From/To	Ottawa	Kingston	Brockville	Leeds & Grenville	Renfrew	Frontenac	Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry	Quebec	Total
Tay Valley	95	35	15	50	0	45	0	0	240
Smiths Falls	375	30	50	155	0	0	10	0	620
Perth	205	0	10	35	0	0	0	10	260
Montague	340	0	10	85	0	0	0	0	435
Mississippi Mills	1,600	10	0	0	155	0	0	20	1,785
Lanark Highlands	335	10	0	0	45	25	0	0	415
Drummond/North Elmsley	435	15	15	40	0	15	10	10	540
Carleton Place	1,515	0	0	15	15	0	0	0	1,545
Beckwith	1,225	10	0	0	15	0	0	0	1,250

External destinations with trip volumes that exceed any internal destination from each municipality are shaded in orange, while other prominent external destinations with volumes exceeding 100 trips are shaded in yellow. All external trips are aggregated to the City or County level, while all trips to Quebec are aggregated together.

Data Source: 2021 Federal Census

2.4.3 Trip Generators

Identifying major generators of travel can help indicate where a rural public transportation service would be most beneficial. Across the study area, many of these major destinations are in the four main settlement areas of Carleton Place, Mississippi Mills, Smiths Falls, and Perth. Some trip generators include:

- **Hospitals:** Carleton Place & District Memorial Hospital, Perth and Smiths Falls District Hospital (one location in each of Perth and Smiths Falls), Almonte General Hospital
- **Industry and Employment:** 3M Canada, Tweed Cannabis, and industrial parks in the south of Perth, the east of Smiths Falls, and the north of Carleton Place
- **Transportation:** Smiths Falls Via Rail station, Highway 7 intercity bus stops in Carleton Place and Perth
- **Retail:** Downtown cores of Smiths Falls, Perth, Carleton Place, and Almonte, commercial retail clusters on Highway 7 in Perth and Carleton Place, Ottawa St in Almonte, and Highway 15 in Smiths Falls
- **Social Services:** Lanark County Mental Health, Lanark County Interval House, Community Employment Services (Perth), The Table Community Food Centre (Perth), Open Doors for Lanark Children and Youth (Carleton Place), Smiths Falls Community Health Centre, Smiths Falls Food Bank
- **Municipal Services:** Town Halls, recreation centres, and public libraries in each of Smiths Falls, Perth, Carleton Place, and Almonte

Other potential major trip generators, if re-opened in the future, could include the Algonquin College Perth Campus and the former Hershey chocolate factory in Smiths Falls.

An overview of trip generators in Carleton Place, Almonte, Perth, and Smiths Falls is shown in the following exhibits.

Exhibit 2-7: Trip Generators in Carleton Place



Exhibit 2-8: Trip Generators in Almonte

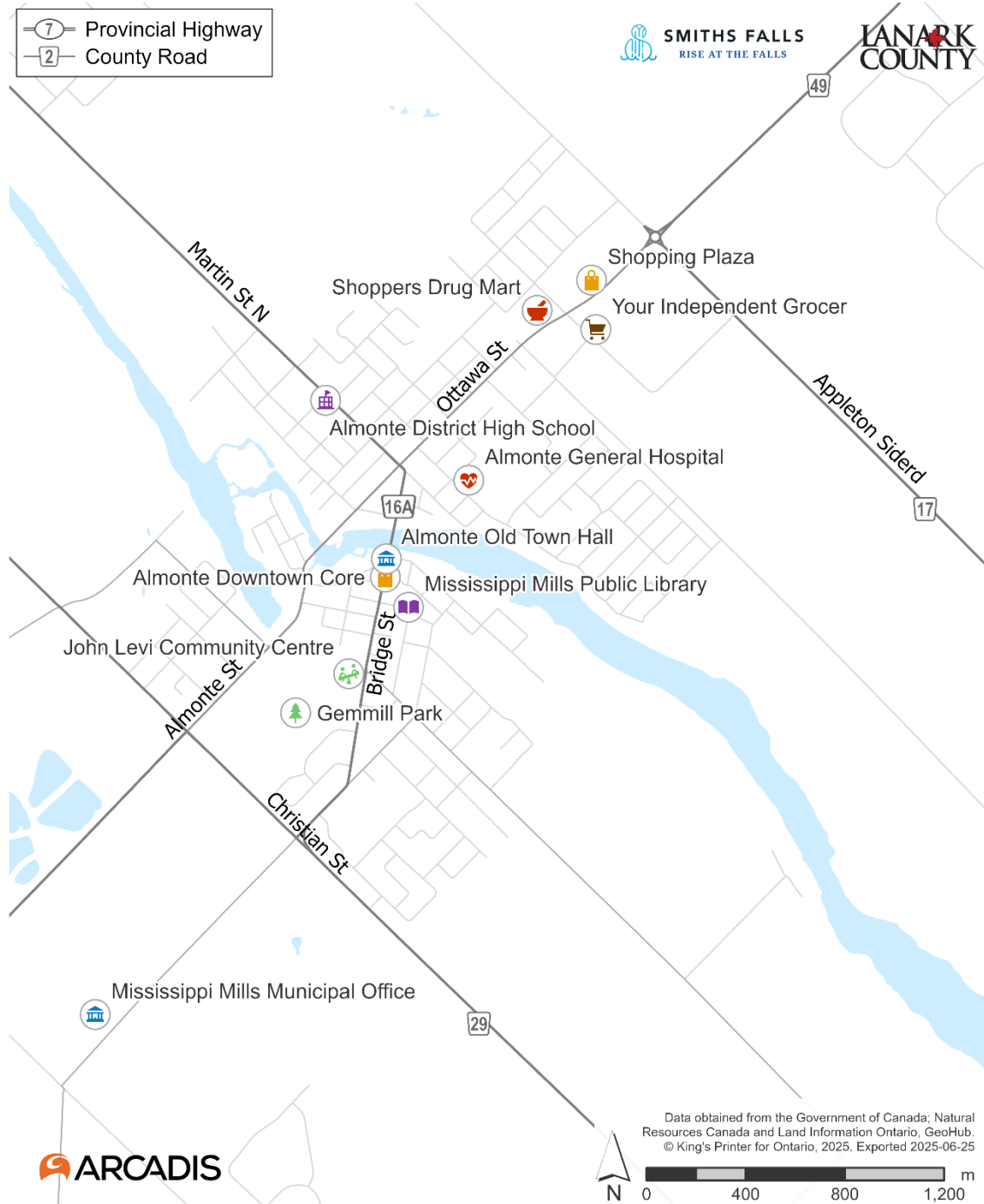


Exhibit 2-9: Trip Generators in Perth

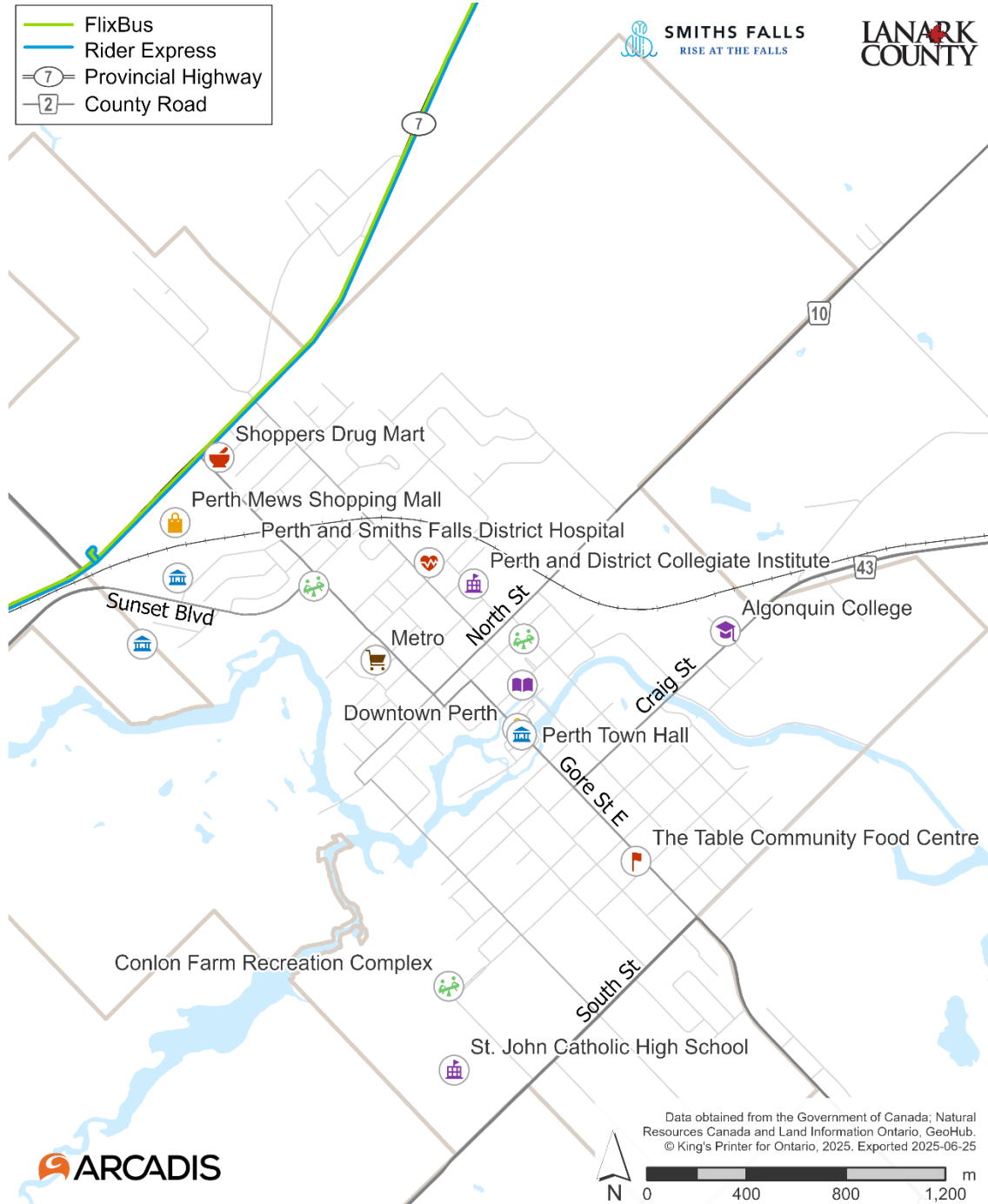
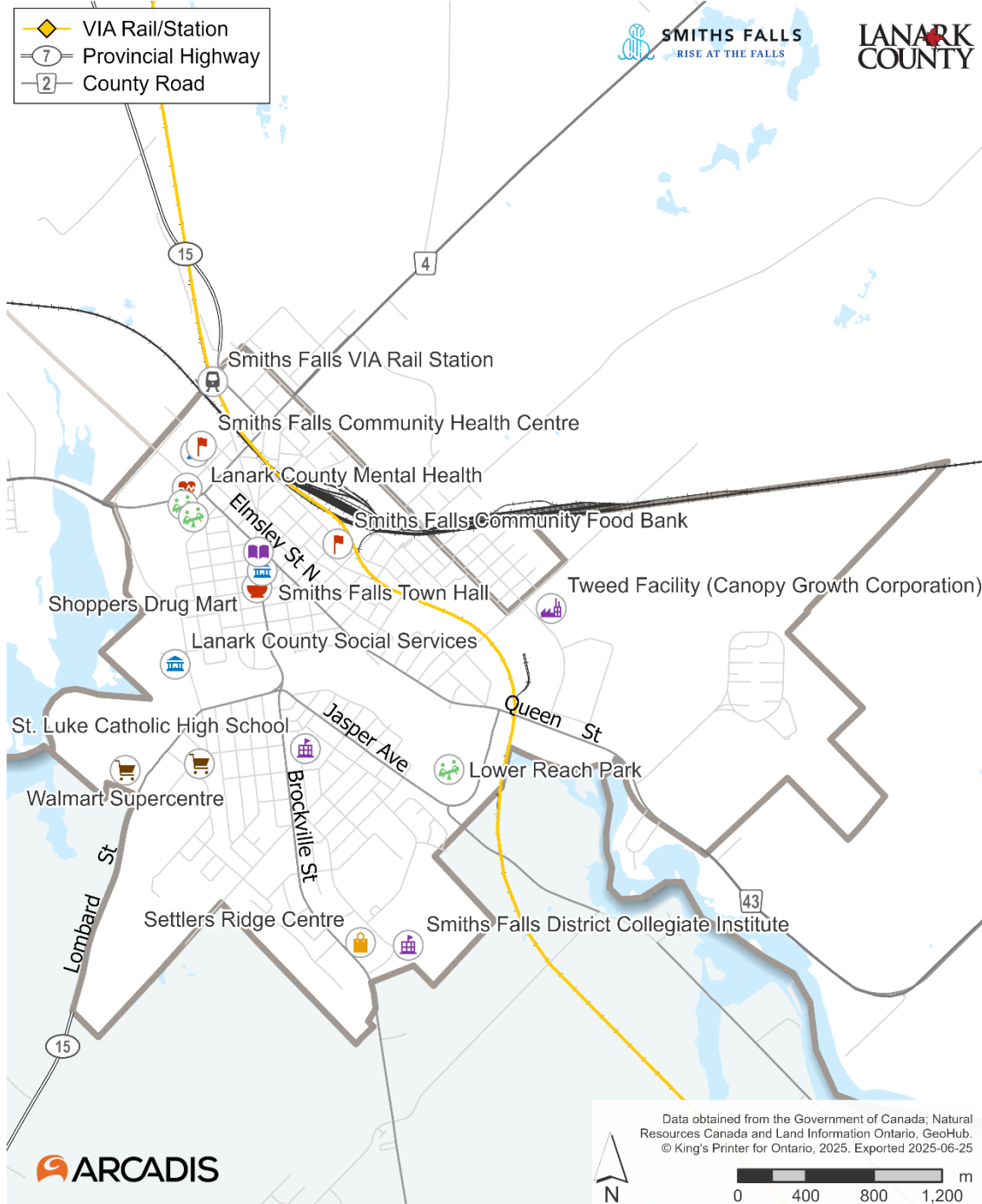


Exhibit 2-10: Trip Generators in Smiths Falls



2.5 Best Practices Review

In assessing the feasibility and potential benefits of a rural public transportation service, it can be instructive to understand the experiences of other communities. The following is a review of selected comparable rural transit systems from around Ontario, demonstrating different ways municipalities can choose to serve their community.

2.5.1 NG Transit (North Grenville)

North Grenville, a rural and urban township of around 18,000 people near Lanark County and the City of Ottawa, launched its own on-demand public transit service in January 2024. The service's operation is contracted out to a third party and is enabled by on-demand transit software provided by Blaise Transit. In its first year of service, NG Transit completed just over 8,000 trips. In September 2025, NG Transit launched a service expansion that included a second, larger vehicle and a scheduled route from Kemptville to the Limebank LRT Station in the south end of Ottawa. The new Ottawa route operates two trips in the morning and two in the evening on weekdays, while the on-demand service within North Grenville operates from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Monday to Saturday and 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Sundays. Adult fares are \$5 per ride individually, while riders can also purchase 10-ticket bundles for \$45 and monthly passes for \$70.

2.5.2 Brant Transit (Brant County)

Brant Transit is an on-demand transit system serving Brant County, a mostly rural single-tier municipality of just over 39,000 people that surrounds the City of Brantford in southwestern Ontario. The system is operated using a fleet of County-branded SUVs by Via, a company that provides booking software and operations for on-demand transit service and has been in operation since 2019. Over 25,000 rides were provided in 2024. In a 2025 survey conducted by the County, some respondents expressed support for a scheduled route between Paris, the County's largest population centre, and the City of Brantford, though the system remains exclusively on-demand at this time. Riders are required to book trips at least a day in advance to ensure a spot. Service on Brant Transit operates from 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. on weekdays and 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on weekends. Fares cost a flat rate of \$5, with punch cards available for regular riders, but a bulk discount is not provided as a 10-ride punch card costs \$50. Reduced fares of \$3 are available for riders over the age of 55.

2.5.3 Ride Norfolk (Norfolk County)

Ride Norfolk has been operating public transit in Norfolk County, a primarily rural county in southwestern Ontario of approximately 73,000 people, since 2011. The service originally operated a series of fixed routes around the County, with service primarily oriented around the community of Simcoe and different communities around the County served on different days. The system changed to a primarily on-demand service in 2023, using existing bus stops across the County and a booking platform powered by Blaise Transit. The service operates one fixed route between Simcoe and Brantford with stops in Waterford, Wilsonville, Oakland, and Mount Pleasant. This route operates one morning and one afternoon trip, while on-demand transit operates on weekdays from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Ride Norfolk offers a variety of fare products. Regular adult fares are \$3 for “in-town” service and \$6.50 for “out-of-town” service. A pass worth \$39 in rides can be purchased for \$26, monthly passes are available for \$68, and semester-long passes are available to students for \$120.

2.5.4 Muskoka Community Transit

Muskoka Community Transit is the public transit provider for the District Municipality of Muskoka, a large community of just over 66,000 people across nearly 4,000 square kilometres. The system’s operation is contracted to Hammond Transportation, Ltd. and has been in operation since 2012. The system is primarily oriented around the Corridor 11 Bus, a fixed transit route that operates from Huntsville in the north to Orillia in the south, around 90km. Since 2024, this corridor has been augmented by an on-demand transit service known as the District Demand-Responsive Transit, or DRT. The first phase launched within the urban area of the Town of Gravenhurst, which does not have its own local transit route unlike the larger communities of Huntsville and Bracebridge. This service area expanded in 2025 to include other areas around Gravenhurst, ranging from Kilworthy in the south to the Muskoka Airport and Highway 118 in the north. The Corridor 11 bus operates three daily north-south runs from 6:00 a.m. to 7:15 p.m., with each individual trip taking around two hours each way, while District DRT operates from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on weekdays. Corridor 11 fares are distance-based and range from \$2 to \$20 for one-way trips and \$3 to \$30 for round trips. Fares on District DRT cost \$5, while monthly passes are available for \$70.

2.5.5 Summary of Findings

Key findings of the review of best practices among rural transit systems in Ontario include:

- Inter-community systems have focused operating hours when compared to urban transit systems, which are more likely to operate all day, every day. Services that must cover a

large service area may not be able to operate at all times due to financial constraints, so they must thus prioritize the times of day that are most important to riders and most likely to generate ridership. Services aligned towards rush hours are not typical in rural areas, with service operating continuously from the early morning until at least the early evening. For systems that do operate on weekends, service tends not to operate as early or late as weekday service.

- Many rural systems across Ontario have begun to operate a mix of on-demand transit and fixed routes. On-demand transit, which is enabled by technological improvements in trip booking and dispatching software, can be an appropriate way to serve dispersed travel patterns across a wide area. Along corridors of higher travel demand, fixed-route services deliver a more scalable service, as seen by Muskoka's Corridor 11 bus, Norfolk's route to Brantford, and North Grenville's route to Ottawa. Both types of service can work together to suit different demand levels and patterns.
- The operations of rural transit systems are usually contracted to third-party operators. Contracted operations can be a way of minimizing costs through competitive bids. This may also allow municipalities that do not have transit operations experience to lean on the expertise of companies that are accustomed to running a transit system, which can avoid the potential risks of establishing a new operating division from the ground up.
- Many peer systems use flat or zone-based fare structures. Flat fares are viewed as more equitable, as they provide long-distance travel at more affordable costs, while zone-based fares can be a way to offset the high operating cost of very long distances that are typical of many rural transit systems. Muskoka's Corridor 11 is a good example of this, with trips to nearby stops costing much less than the fare of the full route distance.

2.6 Stakeholder and Public Engagement: Phase 1

To develop an understanding of transportation needs and priorities in Lanark and Smiths Falls, public and stakeholder engagement activities were conducted across two phases. The first phase of engagement, which focused on introducing the study to the public and soliciting feedback about travel needs, was conducted in May 2025. Engagement activities included:

- A public opinion survey, which received 513 total responses;
- Three public outreach pop-up sessions, which took place in Smiths Falls, Perth, and Almonte; and
- A stakeholder consultation workshop that followed a World Café format, held at the Lanark County Council Chambers in Perth. Stakeholders included representatives from municipalities, economic development groups, and social service agencies. Participants

rotated between tables at the beginning of each discussion question, ensuring a variety of discussion groups and perspectives.

Input from the public and stakeholders was important in better understanding transportation deficits that exist in the community today and how services could be designed to suit the community's needs. A full summary of engagement activities and takeaways is given in Appendix A.

2.6.1 Key Findings

Some key findings from the first phase of public and stakeholder engagement include:

- Accessibility was a major concern raised by public respondents and stakeholders alike, suggesting the limited number of available transportation options in Lanark and Smiths Falls represents a barrier to accessibility, and also emphasizing the need for a future public transportation system to be accessible to all users.
- Aging in place was cited as a major factor in support for transit, as it may be difficult for seniors to remain in their homes long-term if they age out of driving, as that is often the only way to access key services.
- Jobs and services, even within settlement areas, vary considerably across the study area with different communities having different services and jobs available. Connections to and between multiple settlement areas were cited as being important to residents and stakeholders. For example, Perth and Smiths Falls are in the same hospital network and residents of one community can often be directed to the other for appointments.
- A recurring theme raised by community members and stakeholders was the potential to build transit service up gradually by starting with something smaller and more locally focused, ultimately growing into a bigger and more comprehensive service.
- Financial sustainability was a very important consideration for residents and stakeholders among those who supported and did not support introducing expanded transportation services. Any service that is introduced must be done so in a financially sustainable way.

2.7 Summary of Challenges & Opportunities

The following summarizes Lanark and Smiths Falls' transportation challenges in the provision of public transit, and opportunities which could be capitalized on to enhance transportation options in the area. Both are addressed through the following sections of this report.

2.7.1 Challenges

- **Gaps in the existing transportation system:** The current availability of transportation services in Lanark County is limited for those who are not necessarily able to drive or walk everywhere that they need to go. Access to affordable and reliable transportation remains a barrier for seniors, low-income residents, jobseekers, and youth across the community.
- **An aging population:** Residents over the age of 65 are more prevalent across most of the study area compared to the provincial average, especially in Perth and Tay Valley. While many of these residents are used to driving and will continue to do so into their older age, not all will be able to continue to do so indefinitely. Access to reliable transportation that does not require driving could enable more seniors to age in place for longer.
- **Dispersed travel patterns:** There is no clear dominant centre of travel across Lanark and Smiths Falls, with each community having its own unique and distinct transportation needs and many communities often wanting to travel in several directions. Trip patterns, both within and outside of Lanark and Smiths Falls, are varied and complex. This distinguishes Lanark from some of the communities in the Best Practices Review such as Brant County, where a very high proportion of trips to and from the County are taken to or from Brantford.

2.7.2 Opportunities

- **Building on local experience:** Lanark and Smiths Falls have a wealth of transportation expertise in the region based on the operational experience of Lanark Transportation and the advocacy of the Rural Transportation Working Group. Leveraging this expertise properly will be important to ensure the success of any future rural public transit system.
- **Emulating the success of other rural transit systems:** There has recently been a renewal of interest in rural transit across Ontario, with many communities introducing their own transit system. By emulating the successes and learning from the failures of other communities, Lanark and Smiths Falls can increase the likelihood of establishing a successful and sustainable system.
- **New and emerging technologies:** Recent advances in mobile computing, vehicle dispatching software, and the increased availability of smartphones have resulted in an increase in the effectiveness and efficiency of on-demand transit. This has meant that some services that would not have been possible in the past can now be operated more cost-effectively by rural municipalities, to the benefit of the community.

3 Transit Solutions Planning

This section investigates alternative transit service delivery approaches to determine the best approach towards delivering a rural public transportation service that is suited to Lanark County and Smiths Falls.

3.1 Transit Service Types

The following transit service types were considered for their applicability to the study area and assessed according to how well they could address the transportation needs of Lanark County and Smiths Falls.

- Conventional Fixed Route
- Flexible Route
- On-Demand Transit
- Rideshare and Taxi Vouchers
- Specialized Transit (Exclusive)

3.1.1 Conventional Fixed Route

This type of transit service is characterized by a defined route and a defined schedule. Riders can determine in advance where and when the bus will be by consulting the map and schedule of the route. The bus does not deviate away from its route except in cases of road closures, as that would compromise the reliability that is required for riders who depend on it to be in a consistent place at a consistent time. Fixed transit routes are good for connecting major centres and destinations and in built-up urban areas, but are less effective in more dispersed areas where the number of potential customers along the route is lower and the walking distance to stops is higher.

Exhibit 3-1: OC Transpo Transit Bus¹



Within a rural or intercommunity service context, fixed routes are generally based around connecting towns with a major centre that has a critical mass of jobs and services. Examples include Norfolk County’s Simcoe-Brantford route, NG Transit’s Kemptville-Ottawa route, and Muskoka’s Corridor 11.

3.1.2 Flexible Route

A flexible route is similar to a fixed transit route as it normally follows a defined route on a defined schedule, but differs as the bus is able to deviate a certain distance away from the normal route if a customer requests the operator to do so or if the deviation is booked ahead of time. Departure times for flexible routes are provided from a series of set points that the route will always serve, regardless of flexible deviations. A flexible route will allow for wider service coverage than a fully fixed route, but deviations can cause travel impacts for other customers on the bus, and time built into the schedule for deviations can lead to the bus waiting in place

¹ [Photo](#) by Shankar S. licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#)

for a long period of time if no deviation or extension is requested. Flexible routes were formerly operated by Muskoka Community Transit through the Rural Community Connector service, but this was ultimately replaced with the fully on-demand District DRT.

A system of flexible routes could serve Lanark and Smiths Falls more equitably than fully fixed routes, but this type of service otherwise encounters the same type of challenges as fixed routes, and a route can only deviate so much from a fixed corridor before its reliability becomes compromised. A system of flexible routes could thus only cover some corridors and some residents within walking distance, and would not be able to serve the whole County without significant cost due to the dispersed population.

3.1.3 On-Demand Transit

On-demand transit, also known as demand-responsive transit or microtransit, is a type of transit service that does not operate on a fixed route or a fixed schedule. Riders request or book trips using an app on a mobile device or by calling a customer service centre. This provides less certainty for riders in terms of route and schedule, but more flexibility, which may allow users to travel more directly from their origin to their destination. On-demand services can be a more cost-effective way to serve a pattern of travel demand that is spread out across a large area, as the bus will only go out to a pickup or drop-off location if requested. Service coverage can thus be provided without consistently going out to the same place continuously. NG Transit, Brant Transit, Ride Norfolk, and Muskoka's District DRT are all examples of on-demand transit being deployed in rural and smaller-community contexts.

Exhibit 3-2: Edmonton Transit On-Demand Bus²



On-demand transit is good at serving lower-demand, lower-density areas, like much of the study area, in a cost-effective manner. Vehicles only go out when and where they are needed, which allows them to be utilized more effectively than a bus that must follow a fixed route and schedule regardless of where customers need it to be. Longer trips using demand-responsive transit are more expensive to operate, and a customer's wait time will be limited by the number of vehicles in service at once, so these are important considerations in how such a service should be designed. Each hour of in-service or on-call time for an operator and vehicle adds cost to operating the system.

3.1.4 Rideshare and Taxi Vouchers

Municipalities may also partner with existing private transportation providers that are already operating in their jurisdiction, such as rideshare and taxi companies. These companies employ drivers who can be hired by anyone, either by booking a trip on a mobile app (rideshare) or calling a dispatch office (taxi). The cost of hiring a rideshare vehicle or a taxi typically exceeds that of an average transit fare. Municipalities partnering with these companies can subsidize

² [Photo](#) by TagaSanPedroAko, licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

www.arcadis.com

customers' trips in order to bring down the cost to the customer to a level more in line with a public transit service. An example of this type of service is provided by the Town of Innisfil, which has partnered with Uber for its transportation service. The Town has reported that this partnership has enabled Innisfil to expand service coverage beyond what they would have been able to achieve with exclusively fixed transit routes, and the Town is now studying the implementation of fixed route to complement the rideshare partnership service.

Rideshare systems and taxi vouchers have similar positive and negative attributes; the main difference between the two is the booking interface. Rideshare apps may also allow for the pooling or sharing of customer trips to increase service productivity. Contracting service to a rideshare or taxi company provides a similar service to customers as on-demand transit, subsidizing the trips of individual riders rather than the operation of a system.

There are pros and cons to this approach. It requires less direct involvement from the municipality but depends on factors such as vehicle and driver availability that are outside the government's control. In areas such as rural Lanark County where the number of available taxis is low, this type of service would be more difficult to operate than in urbanized areas where taxis are more plentiful and rideshare companies such as Uber or Lyft are actively operating. This can also make finding wheelchair-accessible vehicles more complex. The program can become expensive if it becomes popular; in Innisfil's example, customers are limited to a maximum of 30 trips per month to keep costs down.

3.1.5 Specialized Transit (Exclusive)

Specialized transit, also known as paratransit, is a type of transit service that is similar to on-demand, but requires users to meet eligibility criteria. Specialized transit systems are designed to be fully accessible for people with disabilities and will often transport customers door-to-door. Because the cost per trip of a specialized transit service is very high, access to the system is restricted to those who need it most. Many larger transit agencies will operate a parallel specialized transit system to provide service for those who cannot use other transit routes due to physical or other limitations. Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), discussed further in Section 4.3, it is mandatory for providers of conventional transit to provide a specialized transportation alternative for anyone who is not able to use the conventional system because of a disability. Ottawa's Para Transpo is an example of specialized transit.

In a rural context, Bancroft Community Transit (BCT) in North Hastings County is an example of an exclusively specialized transit system. To use BCT services, users must be registered with a participating social agency such as Ontario Works or the Children's Aid Society and referred to BCT by their agency. General members of the public are not eligible to use the

service. By restricting the availability of the service to clients who need it most, BCT is able to keep costs down and maintain sustainable operations in a remote community.

Exhibit 3-3: Specialized Transit Vehicle with Wheelchair Lift in Brooklyn, NY³



A specialized transit system may be necessary in parallel to a transit system in the study area, depending on the accessibility of the chosen service delivery. A specialized transit service requires customers to be eligible. It would provide highly accessible door-to-door service to those who qualify but would not provide transportation to all residents. A system that only provides specialized transit service would be in line with the Bancroft approach of allocating limited resources to those with the highest need.

³ [Photo](#) by Marc A. Hermann, licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#)

www.arcadis.com

3.2 Recommended Service Model

Based on the goals of the study, stakeholder and public engagement (as summarized in Section 2.6), and discussions with elected representatives, the recommended service delivery model for Lanark County and Smiths Falls is **on-demand transit**. Lanark County, inclusive of Smiths Falls, constitutes a very large geographic area with a dispersed population, low population density, and varied pattern of travel demand that is oriented towards many places, rather than one. Operating fixed routes to rural hamlets and along rural roads is expensive, would require many routes with many vehicles and operators to serve rural municipalities, and would still only provide partial service coverage to a dispersed rural community like Lanark Highlands or Tay Valley.

On-demand transit is ideal for the needs of rural communities, and recent technological advancements have improved the viability of on-demand systems in rural areas. A resident of Drummond/North Elmsley, for example, could request a trip to any of Perth, Smiths Falls, and Carleton Place, all of which are potentially significant destinations for community members according to public travel data. On-demand rural transit allows for more complete service coverage, ensuring members of the community can still access transportation service even if they live further away from major highways or settlement areas.

Another notable benefit of on-demand transit is the collection of data by the trip booking and vehicle dispatching software platforms. Communities that have operated on-demand transit have successfully leveraged this data to later implement fixed, scheduled routes on corridors where high levels of demand have been observed. In reference to the theme of building up service over time, as raised by stakeholders and community members, a more data-driven case could be made for fixed routes to supplement on-demand transit in the future if travel demand in certain areas starts to exceed the on-demand service's capacity. The implementation of this is discussed further in Section 5.

3.2.1 Recommended Service Operator

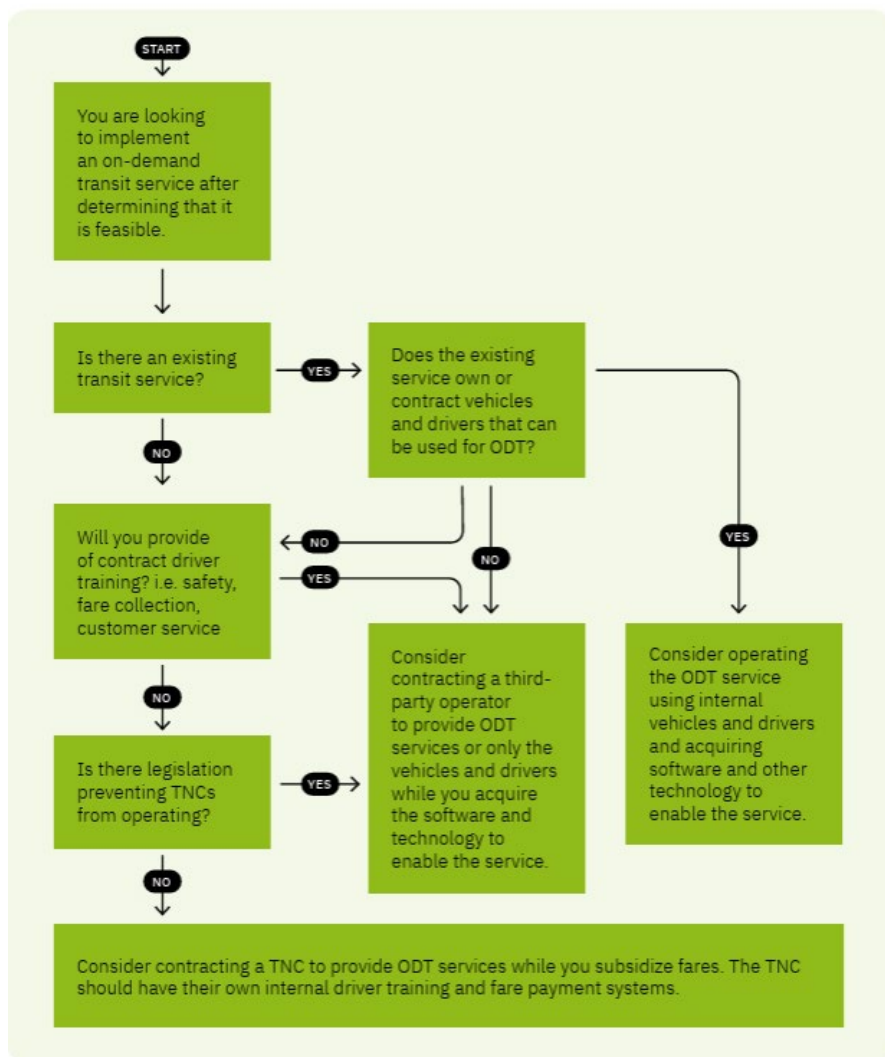
The recommended service operator for on-demand rural transit service in Lanark and Smiths Falls is **Lanark Transportation**. Operating the service through Lanark Transportation enables the preservation of institutional knowledge from an organization that is experienced with operating transportation services in the unique service context of Lanark and Smiths Falls, and leverages existing fleet and resources. Maintaining a single service with a single vehicle booking and dispatching platform will avoid the potential duplication that can arise when two different services are trying to do the same thing, as would be the case if existing LT service and a future County-administered on-demand transit system were operating in parallel with

Lanark & Smiths Falls Rural Transit Feasibility Study

different platforms and different fleet. This represents a more efficient use of vehicle fleet, reducing the likelihood of two vehicles following each other to the same place. It also provides an opportunity to improve the experience of existing LT users using technologically enabled trip booking and vehicle dispatching, making the system more adaptable and user-friendly.

The use of Lanark Transportation's existing vehicle fleet and institutional knowledge to implement on-demand transit is aligned with the Canadian Urban Transit Association's guidance on the implementation of on-demand transit. This is the most efficient use of existing infrastructure and reduces the need to buy vehicles and train new drivers. A flowchart illustrating potential on-demand business operating models is shown in Exhibit 3-4 below.

Exhibit 3-4: On-Demand Transit Operating Models⁴



⁴ Image by the Canadian Urban Transit Association from [CUTA On-Demand Transit Toolkit](https://www.cuta.ca/On-Demand-Transit-Toolkit)

3.3 Stakeholder and Public Engagement: Phase 2

The second phase of public and stakeholder engagement, which focused on understanding the preferences of community members related to on-demand transit service in Lanark and Smiths Falls, was conducted in August 2025. Engagement activities included:

- A public opinion survey, which received 109 total responses,
- Three public outreach pop-up sessions, which took place in Smiths Falls, Perth, and Almonte,
- A stakeholder consultation workshop that followed a single group discussion format, held at the Lanark County Administration Building in Perth. Attendees included representatives from Lanark Transportation, municipalities, social service agencies, and economic development groups.

Input from the public and stakeholders was important in better understanding how on-demand transit service could be designed to suit the community's needs. A full summary of engagement activities and takeaways is given in Appendix A.

3.3.1 Key Findings

Some key findings from the second phase of public and stakeholder engagement include:

- Residents stated that vehicles should accommodate every potential user, with consideration for any and all mobility aids users might require.
- Stakeholders and community members noted a sensitivity to public cost, emphasizing the importance of starting small and minimizing the need for tax increases. Some stakeholders suggested the transit service should be creative with pursuing opportunities to generate revenue.
- Stakeholders suggested a County-wide service could improve outcomes for jobseekers, enabling them to cast a wider net. Some community members suggested growing the service in the future to enable connections to employment in Ottawa.
- Residents and stakeholders agreed that communications and promotion will be crucial to ensuring the long-term success of future services.

3.4 Transit Demand Forecasting

Projected annual ridership for on-demand transit in Lanark and Smiths Falls is estimated to be in the range of **25,000 to 31,000 trips**. This forecast is based on a comparative analysis of similar on-demand rural transit systems in Ontario, where we examined key performance indicators such as rides per capita and rides per vehicle service hour. By applying observed

rates from peer communities to Lanark’s operating context and service levels, we arrived at a realistic estimate that reflects both current Lanark Transportation usage and anticipated growth as a result of the on-demand transit enhancement.

3.4.1 Fleet Requirements

Lanark Transportation’s current fleet size of 20 vehicles is considered sufficient to effectively accommodate the projected annual ridership of 25,000 to 31,000 trips. Peer analysis indicates that similar rural transit systems typically operate with 10 to 20 vehicles, depending on geographic coverage, service hours, and required accessibility features.

Assuming standard operations of approximately 12 hours per vehicle per day and considering the average trip length and scheduling needs, the available fleet can meet anticipated service levels. A spare ratio of approximately 30% is maintained to provide operational flexibility, cover regular maintenance, and respond to unforeseen service needs. This ensures that around 14 vehicles are available for daily operation, with the remainder reserved as spares.

Ongoing monitoring of vehicle utilization and ridership trends is recommended. Should demand grow beyond projections or service hours expand, the fleet size can be reassessed and adjusted accordingly to maintain reliability and accessibility for all users.

3.5 Recommended Service Concept

The structure of the recommended on-demand transit service concept is adapted from Lanark Transportation’s existing service, the observed experience of peer systems, data and demand projections, and input from the community. The following sections discuss the specifics of this service design.

3.5.1 Service Parameters

On-demand transit can operate with several pickup models, each of which may be appropriate in different service contexts. These include **virtual stops**, **curb-to-curb**, and **door-to-door** service models.

Virtual stops are pickup and drop-off locations spread throughout an on-demand service area that mimic conventional bus stops. When riders place a trip request, they will be directed to wait at the nearest virtual stop to their location and will be transported by the vehicle to the nearest stop to their destination. Virtual stops can be a useful model in urbanized areas where more riders can be picked up in one location for more efficient routing, or where passenger waiting infrastructure like benches can be installed. They are not practical for rural areas, however, as rural residents generally live on large properties that are spaced far apart from

each other. This arrangement would require either such a high volume of stops as to render the approach impractical or would limit access for residents and dilute the advantage on-demand transit has of providing access to dispersed areas. Virtual stops are not recommended for implementation in Lanark County for this reason.

For the service context of Lanark County and Smiths Falls, **door-to-door** service is recommended. This is the most practical type of service for rural areas where many residents live on large properties. Under this concept, on-demand vehicles drive as close as possible to the door of the rider's origin and destination, including accessing private property such as driveways or other access roads. A door-to-door service also aligns with Lanark Transportation's current practices, which have provided good organizational experience operating vehicles on rural properties and on unpaved roads.

Curb-to-curb services are more practical in contexts where a rider's destination is not set back as far from the property line, or in areas where there is concern about operating vehicles on private property. For long trips across rural communities, riders could understandably question why an on-demand vehicle would drop them off at the property line when the additional drive distance up the property is minimal compared to the distance the vehicle has already travelled.

User demand for on-demand transit systems can be managed to accommodate as many riders as possible. In Brant County, for example, users must request their trips the day before in order for their requests to be accepted, as it is not practical to guarantee every user trip can be served across a large, dispersed area when it is not known in advance where that demand will come from. In the short term, a similar approach is recommended for Lanark County and Smiths Falls. The booking and dispatching software would generate a day's itinerary for the fleet and drivers, scheduling vehicles to accommodate user trip requests submitted in advance. Same-day requests could be accepted, but would not be guaranteed. If a user's same-day request could fit within the day's determined schedule, this trip would be completed as well.

The **recommended service span** for on-demand transit in Lanark and Smiths Falls is from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on weekdays and from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Saturdays. These hours were determined based on the operating hours of peer systems and the results of public engagement, with a sensitivity to minimizing additional costs for the initial launch. Service on Lanark Transportation is currently provided up to 5:00 p.m. on weekdays, while discussions with LT suggested they would be open to introducing service on Saturdays. Engagement results suggested Saturday service is almost as important (if not just as important) as weekday service. Service hours on opening day are meant to accommodate the preferences of potential riders as much as possible while controlling costs and aiming for long-term sustainability.

Depending on rider requests and available resources, service could be expanded in the future to include weekday evenings, Saturday evenings, or Sunday service.

3.5.2 Fare Strategy

Determining the most appropriate fare structure for Lanark On-Demand Transit is critical to balancing system sustainability, equity, and user accessibility. After reviewing current practices and peer systems, two distinct options are presented below:

Option 1: Existing Fare Structure

The existing fare structure, which is not public, charges users an average of \$0.84 per km travelled, resulting in an average fare of \$31.48 per trip according to the 2024 financial statements. This model has a strong capacity for generating farebox revenue, which supports the financial recovery of operating costs and contributes positively to the system's overall sustainability. However, the high cost associated with longer trips common in rural areas can discourage usage among residents, especially those with limited financial means or those who depend on transit for essential travel. This may diminish potential ridership growth expected with the transition towards on-demand transit service. The lack of a publicly detailed fare calculation also reduces transparency, which may impact user confidence and make it difficult for riders to anticipate travel costs.

Option 2: Proposed Zone-Based Fare Structure

A zone-based fare model is proposed to align with best practices in peer rural Ontario systems, providing greater transparency and predictability for users. Depending on financial targets and operating subsidy needs, fare bands can be adjusted up or down, though a dramatic fare increase in a short time may impact ridership. Fares are set according to three distance bands:

- Zone 1 (0–10 km): \$6 per trip
- Zone 2 (11–25 km): \$15 per trip
- Zone 3 (26+ km): \$25 per trip

With a cap at \$25 per trip, this model is designed to enhance affordability and predictability in travel costs. By lowering the maximum trip fare, the zone-based approach makes the service significantly more accessible, especially for transit-dependent individuals and those on fixed or lower incomes. The simplicity and clarity of this fare system further supports transparency and ease of use, fostering greater public confidence and encouraging wider adoption of the transit service. This aligns more closely with other systems evaluated in the best practice review,

while maintaining some sensitivity to the unique aspects of Lanark County such as decentralized travel patterns and longer-distance trips.

The primary advantage of the zone-based fare model lies in its potential to increase ridership by reducing financial barriers and making transit more attractive to a broader cross-section of the community. Its straightforward structure enables users to easily understand and plan for their travel expenses, which can lead to higher customer satisfaction and public trust. However, this option may result in lower fare revenue per trip compared to the existing model, necessitating additional municipal funding or external grants to maintain current service standards and support operational costs.

4 Transit Operation and Governance

The proposed on-demand transit service would be administered by Lanark Transportation with support from Lanark County and the Town of Smiths Falls. This structure would be similar to the existing working partnership and funding contributions paid to Lanark Transportation by the County and the Town. This section provides more detail on operational and implementation considerations for the proposed on-demand service including integration with other transportation services, potential grant funding sources, legislative compliance requirements, projected budgets, and staffing and implementation strategies.

4.1 Service Integration Planning

The primary focus of on-demand transit in Lanark and Smiths Falls is to enable community residents to travel around the service area, with travel to other communities outside of Lanark County being accommodated by non-County service providers. For riders looking to take longer trips, connections will be required between the proposed on-demand transit service and their ultimate destination.

4.1.1 Via Rail

On-demand transit riders in Lanark and Smiths Falls could connect to Via Rail in Smiths Falls to access destinations such as Ottawa, Brockville, Kingston, or Toronto. Parking at the Via Rail station is a surface lot managed by Indigo that contains several short-term loading areas in the centre of the lot. Rider pickups and drop-offs in the parking lot would be consistent with Lanark Transportation's existing pick-up and drop-off procedures, while permission likely would need to be sought from the landowner for regular operation of a fixed-route bus in the future.

4.1.2 Flixbus and Rider Express

Flixbus and Rider Express each have one stop on Highway 7 in Perth and Carleton Place on the long-haul Toronto-Peterborough-Ottawa routes operated by the two companies. The stop in Perth is located in front of the Wendy's at 115 Dufferin Street, while the stop in Carleton Place is located in the parking lot of the Esso gas station at 10483 Highway 7. As these stops are located at the northwestern periphery of Perth and the southern periphery of Carleton Place, they may not be within walking distance of the origins or destinations of potential users. On-demand transit can be used to connect to intercity bus stops for residents of Lanark and Smiths Falls wishing to catch a bus to destinations along Highway 7 like Ottawa, Madoc, or Peterborough.

4.1.3 Proposed Carleton Place-Ottawa Commuter Service

With the discontinuation of the Classic Alliance-operated Regional Partner routes during the COVID-19 pandemic, OC Transpo does not operate transit service in Lanark County or Smiths Falls. The Carleton Place Transit Feasibility Study, which was conducted prior to this project, recommended the establishment of an express commuter service that would run nonstop to Ottawa from the parking lot of the Carambeck Community Centre in Carleton Place, transporting riders to the soon-to-open Moodie Station in the west of Ottawa. As the westernmost terminus station of Ottawa's municipal rail network, a connection to this station would serve a similar purpose as connecting riders to Limebank Station from North Grenville. Residents of other municipalities with a high proportion of Ottawa-bound commuters, such as Mississippi Mills and Beckwith, could use on-demand transit to connect to the Carleton Place-Ottawa route at the community centre when it is operational.

4.2 Funding and Partnerships

Funding sources are available from senior levels of government for capital and operating expenditures related to public transit. This section explores potential provincial and federal transit grants and examines the viability of funding sources for on-demand transit in Lanark County and Smiths Falls.

4.2.1 Ontario Transit Investment Fund

The Ontario Transit Investment Fund (OTIF) intends to address transit service gaps across Ontario by establishing sustainable transit solutions, through building strong partnerships and integrating with existing services. Through OTIF, the Ontario government is investing \$5 million annually to provide funding to support the start-up and growth of transit services in smaller communities. The main principles supporting this fund are integration, coordination, and sustainability and funds can contribute to both operational and capital costs. OTIF will fund up to 50% of the total capital and operational costs for multi-year projects. In the final year, OTIF's contribution will be limited to 30% of that year's costs to help ensure a gradual transition to a sustainable transit service. Application forms must be submitted through Transfer Payment Ontario (TPON). Submissions are accepted at any time over the life of the program, therefore this is a **viable funding source**.

4.2.2 Provincial Gas Tax Funding

Ontario's Dedicated Gas Tax Funds for Public Transportation Program (Gas Tax) supports public transit in municipalities across Ontario by providing two cents per litre of Provincial Gas

Tax to improve and expand transit. Funding can be used for capital and operating costs for public transit and is prorated if the program is joined mid-year. The funding allocation is capped at 75% of the net municipal investment, and is calculated based on a formula that considers ridership (70% share) and municipal population (30% share) relative to Province-wide totals. In 2024, Lanark County (including Smiths Falls) received \$520,558 in funding from the Gas Tax for the present Lanark Transportation service. As population, ridership, and net municipal investment grow, more funding could be obtained. This is a **viable funding source**.

4.2.3 Rural Transit Solution Fund

The Federal Government's Rural Transit Solutions Fund program is targeting the development of transit solutions in rural, remote, northern and Indigenous communities to improve mobility within and between communities. The fund provides two streams for which applicants can seek funding. Eligible applicants can seek grants of up to \$50,000 in support of planning activities; up to \$10 million to cover capital for experienced organizations or a completed public transit feasibility study (dated after January 1, 2020). New organizations without a recent feasibility study may qualify for up to \$250,000 in funding. The Federal contribution, from this program and other programs, is limited at 80% of capital expenses for organizations located in Ontario.

The application period for both programs closed on March 4, 2025, and intake is expected to reopen. This is a **viable funding source** provided the intake reopens.

4.2.4 Canada Community-Building Fund

Canada Community-Building Fund (CCBF), previously named the federal Gas Tax Fund, is a source of infrastructure capital funding for provincial and municipal governments. The funding is distributed from the Federal Government to the Province, and then to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario before being distributed to the municipalities. Municipal allocation is based on population. Over the next five years, the CCBF will invest over \$4.7 billion in Ontario, starting with \$895 million in 2024-2025. Public transit infrastructure is eligible for funding under this program.

Dependent on the existing and planned allocation of the Partners' funding for 2025 (and beyond), they could recommend allocating a portion of the funding for any capital investment incurred from a future transit service. As such, this fund is a **viable funding source** for capital expenditures.

4.2.5 Canada Public Transit Fund

The Canada Public Transit Fund (CPTF) offers three funding pathways: Metro-Region Agreements; Baseline Funding; and Targeted Funding. This program intends to improve and increase the use of public transit, increase housing supply as part of transit-oriented communities, and help mitigate climate change.

For the Metro-Region Agreement stream, an Integrated Regional Plan (IRP) will outline regional transit investments, with a lead applicant responsible for the application process. Participating organizations must be in, be adjacent to, or responsible for planning and infrastructure within a Census Metropolitan Area. Through partnership with Ottawa, this may be a **viable funding source**.

The Baseline Funding stream invests in expanding, rehabilitating, and replacing existing public transit and active transportation infrastructure. There must be a minimum of three years of historical ridership data with a minimum annual ridership of 30,000. As well, the transit service must include fixed route service. For these reasons, this fund is likely **not a viable funding source** in the near-term, while it may become feasible if fixed-route transit is introduced in the future.

The third stream of the CPTF is the Targeted Funding stream which provides a regular series of calls for applications for specific types of public transit and active transportation projects. The Rural Transit Solutions Fund has moved within this stream of the CPTF. There are not currently open calls for applications but in the future, this may be a **viable funding source**.

Note: In the 2025 Federal Budget, it was announced that a portion of funding will be re-allocated from the CPTF into a new “Build Communities Strong Fund”, which will continue to be eligible for transit projects. Details have not yet been communicated, but will likely result in changes to availability of funding within the CPTF program.

4.3 Legislative Requirements

The provision of public transportation in Ontario is guided by various regulations which outline the municipal obligations when providing public transportation service. Many of these regulations apply to and are adhered to by Lanark Transportation. The main regulations guiding the provision of a public transportation service and their requirements are:

The **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)**, 2005, which requires that all public transportation services are compliant with the Act. AODA aims to have a fully accessible province by 2025. To be compliant with the Act, all public transportation services must work to remove barriers from their operations and provide convenient services for all users, including

those with disabilities. The legal obligations for a public transportation service operating in the Province are outlined in Ontario Regulation (O. Reg.) 191/11 and include:

- Providing an alternative accessible method of transportation if the conventional service provided is not accessible and a specialized service is not provided;
- Providing information on the accessibility equipment and features on their vehicles, routes and services in an accessible format;
- Accessibility training for employees and volunteers;
- Developing public emergency preparedness and response policies that provide for the safety of all users;
- Developing equitable fare policies including allowing support persons accompanying a person with a disability to travel for free;
- Developing accessibility plans that include processes for managing, evaluating and taking action on customer feedback;
- Ensuring there is clearly marked priority seating on all vehicles;
- Establishing booking policies that either provide same day service to the extent that it is available or accept booking requests up to three hours before the published end of the service period on the day before the intended day of travel; and,
- Providing accessible means to accept bookings.

Accessible Vehicles Regulation, 1990 O. Reg. 629 which identifies the features required to ensure a public transit vehicle is accessible.

Ontario's **Canadian Content for Transit Vehicle Procurement Policy**, 2008, requires that all transit vehicles procured with provincial funding must have at least 25% Canadian content. Specialized transit buses are exempted from this requirement and instead the transit operator and entity would apply a 5% price preference to the price for the submission with the highest percentage of Canadian content. The Stellantis-made minivans that make up the majority of Lanark Transportation's existing fleet are manufactured in Windsor and would conform to this policy.

The **Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act**, 1990, requires municipalities to protect the privacy of individual's personal information existing in government records, and gives individuals the right to request access to municipal government information, including most general records and those containing their personal information. This regulation would apply to sensitive personal information that is typically collected by on-demand transit booking platforms.

It is recommended that Lanark Transportation take the following steps to ensure regulatory and legal compliance when implementing the proposed on-demand transit service:

- Review the organization’s accessibility training procedures for all staff associated with implementing the public transportation service, including those developing marketing and promotional materials;
- Adopt operating policies that are compliant with the O. Reg. 191/11 requirements for fare policies, booking procedures, and communications and ensure the booking software adheres to these; and,
- Establish policies and procedures, if they do not already exist, for the monitoring the compliance of the service with the legislative requirements outlined in this report.

4.4 Financial Planning

Delivering effective and sustainable on-demand transit service in Lanark County and Smiths Falls requires careful financial planning and ongoing fiscal oversight. This section provides a summary of the anticipated operating and capital budgets associated with the service, as well as projected fare revenues under each fare structure option. The information presented is intended to support informed decision-making, long-term budgeting, and the identification of any funding gaps that may need to be addressed through municipal contributions or external grants. Budgets are provided for the first four years of service implementation.

4.4.1 Projected Operating Budget

Over the next four years, the projected operating budget for the on-demand transit service has been estimated for both the existing fare structure (Option 1) and the zone-based fare structure (Option 2). An overall increase in operating cost is projected based on anticipated ridership increases compared to the existing Lanark Transportation ridership, which is provided as a range. Total operating costs vary based on the fare strategy selected, with a higher fare subsidy being more costly for municipalities to support. The operating budgets are summarized in Exhibit 4-1 and Exhibit 4-2 below:

Exhibit 4-1: Estimated Operating Budget for Option 1 (Existing Fare Structure, \$ in thousands)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Operating Metrics				
Annual Ridership	25,000 – 31,000	25,250 – 31,300	25,650 - 31,800	26,000 - 32,300
Revenues				
Fare Revenue (Option 1)	\$785 - \$976	\$795 - \$985	\$807 - \$1,000	\$820 - \$1,020
Gas Tax Revenue	\$550 - \$570	\$550 - \$570	\$555 - \$575	\$555 - \$575
Donations and Other Contribution	\$34	\$34	\$34	\$34
Total Revenue	\$1369 - \$1580	\$1379 - \$1589	\$1396 - \$1609	\$1409 - \$1629
Operating Costs				
General and Administration	\$406 - \$503	\$410 - \$510	\$416 - \$516	\$422 - \$525
Internal – Dedicated Service	\$1005 - \$1248	\$1015 - \$1255	\$1029 - \$1275	\$1043 - \$1295
Vehicle and Facility Maintenance	\$157 - \$193	\$157 - \$195	\$160 - \$199	\$162 - \$202
Fuel and Energy Consumption	\$142 - \$176	\$143 - \$180	\$145 - \$180	\$148 - \$183
Marketing and Communication	\$10	\$5	\$5	\$5
Total Cost	\$1,720 - \$2,130	\$1,730 - \$2,145	\$1,755 - \$2,175	\$1,780 - \$2,210
Net Cost				
Net Municipal Operating Cost	\$351 – \$550	\$351 – \$556	\$359 – \$566	\$371 – \$581

Exhibit 4-2: Estimated Operating Budget for Option 2 (Zone-Based Fare Structure, \$ in thousands)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Operating Metrics				
Annual Ridership	25,000 – 31,000	25,250 – 31,300	25,650 - 31,800	26,000 - 32,300
Revenues				
Fare Revenue (Option 2)	\$300 - \$370	\$300 - \$370	\$310 - \$380	\$310 - \$380
Gas Tax Revenue	\$520 - \$540	\$520 - \$540	\$530 - \$550	\$530 - \$550
Donations and Other Contribution	\$34	\$34	\$34	\$34
Total Revenue	\$854 - \$944	\$854 - \$944	\$874 - \$964	\$874 - \$964
Operating Costs				
General and Administration	\$406 - \$503	\$410 - \$510	\$416 - \$516	\$422 - \$525
Internal – Dedicated Service	\$1005 - \$1248	\$1015 - \$1255	\$1029 - \$1275	\$1043 - \$1295
Vehicle and Facility Maintenance	\$157 - \$193	\$157 - \$195	\$160 - \$199	\$162 - \$202
Fuel and Energy Consumption	\$142 - \$176	\$143 - \$180	\$145 - \$180	\$148 - \$183
Marketing and Communication	\$10	\$5	\$5	\$5
Total Cost	\$1,720 - \$2,130	\$1,730 - \$2,145	\$1,755 - \$2,175	\$1,780 - \$2,210
Net Cost				
Net Municipal Operating Cost	\$855 - \$1,185	\$875 - \$1,200	\$880 - \$1,210	\$905 - \$1,245

4.4.2 Projected Capital Budget

Beyond the operational costs associated with day-to-day running of the system, capital expenses are expected. These expenses will support both transition of the existing Lanark Transportation service to on-demand transit, and ongoing operations. As Lanark Transportation is currently operating, capital expenses represent: 1) the addition of one new growth shuttle bus; 2) replacement fleet upon end of service life, and; 3) on-demand transit software for trip dispatching and booking, based on peer contract costs.

Estimated capital expenses for On-Demand transit over the next four years is provided in Exhibit 4-3 below, with budget assumptions in Section 4.4.3:

Exhibit 4-3: Estimated Capital Budget (\$ in thousands)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Transit Growth Fleet	\$300	\$0	\$0	\$0
Transit Replacement Fleet	\$228	\$228	\$228	\$228
On-Demand Software Provider	\$30	\$30	\$30	\$30
Total Capital Cost	\$558	\$258	\$258	\$258

4.4.3 Budget Assumptions

The following assumptions were considered in the development of the budgets above:

- Current dollars are used, ignoring the impacts of inflation.
- Costs have the opportunity to be offset by funding grants noted in Section 4.2. Gas Tax funding has been carried forward since it is currently provided to Lanark Transportation.
- Revenues for the zone-based fare scenario used StatsCan Journey to Work data to estimate the share of travel between origin-destination pairs, and distance between the centroid of each pair. Actual Lanark Transportation travel patterns may vary from observed commuting data from the Census.
- Gas Tax revenue is an estimate based on the MTO’s funding allocation formula, but the funding pool is tied to province-wide fuel consumption and therefore cannot be predicted with full accuracy.
- Fleet costs assume that fleet age is consistently spaced in absence of a provided fleet plan. Market rates for minivans (\$75,000) and accessible vans (\$100,000), and specialized transit bus (\$300,000) are assumed, with a useful life of 8 years. Therefore 1/8th of the total fleet cost was budgeted for annually. Actual fleet replacement costs may vary based on in-service useful life observed by Lanark Transportation.

4.5 Implementation Planning

To successfully deliver on-demand transit service in Lanark County and Smiths Falls, several actions must be taken by the municipalities and by the service operator, Lanark Transportation. This section summarizes key action items to be completed in advance of the service’s launch.

4.5.1 Staff Resource Requirements

Administrative staff resources will be required for the management, monitoring, and promotion of the on-demand transit service. At this time, it is recommended that the following tasks be assigned within the purview of Lanark Transportation staff:

- Hiring and training drivers
- Accepting and processing fare payments
- Tracking and reconciling ridership and revenue data
- Responding to customer enquiries and feedback
- Accepting trip requests
- Dispatching vehicles and communicating with drivers
- Vehicle fueling
- Vehicle inspections and maintenance
- Preparing reports and documentation for the Ministry of Transportation, the Canadian Urban Transit Association, and other agencies that track transit service data in Ontario

Based on discussions with Lanark Transportation, their existing Transportation Coordinator would provide those services outlined above. Lanark Transportation has advised that an additional staff member would be required to expand operations from Monday to Saturday as ridership increases. The budgeted operating cost in Section 4.4 has scaled up Lanark Transportation's estimated staff and administration costs accordingly.

In addition to these key operational staff requirements, some responsibilities would be shared between Lanark Transportation, Lanark County, and the Town of Smiths Falls. These include:

- Administration of contracts and operating agreements between Lanark Transportation, the municipalities, and the software vendor (including developing the RFP for software)
- Marketing and communications of the service, including distributing promotional materials
- Reviewing eligibility requirements for receiving funding from other levels of government, exploring additional funding options, and applying for grants

Key responsibilities are subject to further discussion and agreement between the parties.

4.5.2 Software Procurement

Successfully procuring on-demand transportation software will be a necessary step in advance of launching on-demand transit services in Lanark County and Smiths Falls. A suitable on-demand software for the proposed service would require a booking and payment platform for users, back-end access for dispatch staff, automated vehicle dispatching and scheduling, and a suitable interface for drivers to view their schedules. Software proponents should

demonstrate their offline communication and operation capabilities to prevent service disruptions or dropped trips when vehicles pass through areas with limited reception.

The process of procuring the software will include:

- Drafting the Request for Proposal (RFP) document
- Publishing the RFP document to a public bidding portal
- Marketing the RFP to potential software vendors
- Evaluating RFP responses and selecting the preferred software vendor
- Receiving approvals and endorsement of the preferred vendor from Council or other relevant authorities
- Executing final contract negotiations with the selected software provider

The RFP and contract terms should be structured to encourage strong and competitive bids from qualified and reputable vendors that have successfully deployed on-demand transit service in comparable jurisdictions to Lanark County and Smiths Falls. Following the selection of the preferred software vendor, extensive testing with Lanark Transportation staff (including drivers and dispatchers) is recommended before a full launch to ensure satisfaction.

4.5.3 Marketing and Communications

A marketing and communications plan is important to raise awareness of on-demand transit service in Lanark County and Smiths Falls, among both existing LT riders and potential new users of the service. Increasing awareness can be challenging with on-demand transit as its lack of physical infrastructure compared to conventional transit can make it less visible and its presence less obvious. Recognizable branding, including a clear brand message and a distinct visual identify, is an important way to make the service as visible as possible. In this aspect, Lanark Transportation has a clear advantage as an existing organization with a distinct brand, having undergone a major re-branding exercise in 2018 leading to its current design.

To build on this recognition, Lanark Transportation and the municipalities should work with the on-demand software vendor to develop an identity for the new booking platform that ties in with Lanark Transportation's existing organizational brand. This promotional scheme should be paired with targeted marketing to make people in the community more aware of the enhanced transportation service. Targeted marketing can take two main forms: community-based marketing, and media advisories or paid advertising. Community based marketing would primarily involve communicating with existing services that work with existing and potential users, such as seniors and low-income residents. This is a more engaged form of promotion, requiring ongoing two-way communication with community groups.

In addition to communicating through existing community groups, it will be important for the on-demand transit service to be promoted at community events, such as festivals and farmers markets. Media advisories and paid advertising (including targeted social media advertising) can be a one-time undertaking to promote the launch of on-demand transit. Following launch, it is important to communicate information about the service on an on-going basis to help grow ridership. The following tasks are recommended as part of the marketing and communications plan:

- Develop **customer information materials** including a website and an on-demand transit brochure. These will incorporate the essential information about the service, such as operating hours, service area, how to book a trip, and fares.
- Establish a **customer feedback** portal to provide information to riders and accept feedback about the service. It is recommended that this be done through Lanark Transportation's existing structure.
- Provide **consistent updates to Councils** on the performance of the service and recent news related to its operation.
- Create **creative promotions** by advertising the service at community-wide events. Charter or special promotional services could be arranged through event organizers to boost awareness of the service and raise revenue.

The typical cost for a special promotional effort for the launch of the service, including development and distribution of promotional materials, is estimated at \$10,000. An annual budget for ongoing promotional activities should be established depending on the promotional activities selected. This budget can be supplemented by cross-promotional activities with other municipal services, local businesses and community services.

4.5.4 Monitoring and Key Performance Indicators

Following the launch of on-demand transit service, it will be important to continuously track performance to anticipate and respond to operational issues, monitor financial health, and ensure the community's expectations continue to be met. An effective monitoring program will proactively manage risks while making use of the rich data generated by on-demand booking platforms to guide the service towards any future changes that could further benefit the community.

This data can help the County, Town, and Lanark Transportation identify usage trends, common destinations, demand peaks, vehicle utilization rates, the overall cost effectiveness of the service, and potential gaps. Collecting data is necessary to generate reports for provincial Gas Tax and grant applications, as well as trade associations such as the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) and Ontario Public Transit Association (OPTA). Benchmarking

Lanark and Smiths Falls against peer agencies and communities provides useful insight for municipal staff and political decision-makers towards the future direction of transit.

Recommended metrics for collection and monitoring include:

- Ridership
- Revenue
- Service Utilization
- Cost per Trip
- Trip Rejection Rate
- Customer Satisfaction
- Customer Wait Time
- Customer In-Vehicle Time

Over time, it will be useful to determine some guidelines that would inform future decisions regarding transit service changes. This could include changes to service span (for example, adding later-evening or Sunday service), changes to service parameters (like guaranteeing same-day bookings or altering a customer's allowable wait time), changes to the service area, or the introduction of conventional transit routes. These decisions would be made through a combination of community input and data-driven performance monitoring.

The municipalities should consider setting maximum thresholds for **customer wait time, customer in-vehicle time, and trip rejection rates**. These metrics are indicators of the rider experience, and the overall health of the system.

5 Future Considerations

A recurring theme expressed by stakeholders, community members, and elected officials during the study was the potential for this project to initiate something larger. The on-demand transit service in Lanark and Smiths Falls could start with a modest scope and eventually expand into a more comprehensive offering. This growth could be seen in various forms, such as increasing the vehicle fleet or extending operating hours into evenings or Sundays, or eventually introducing a fixed transit route, provided funding is available and the demand from ridership justifies such expansion.

5.1 Fixed Route Expansion

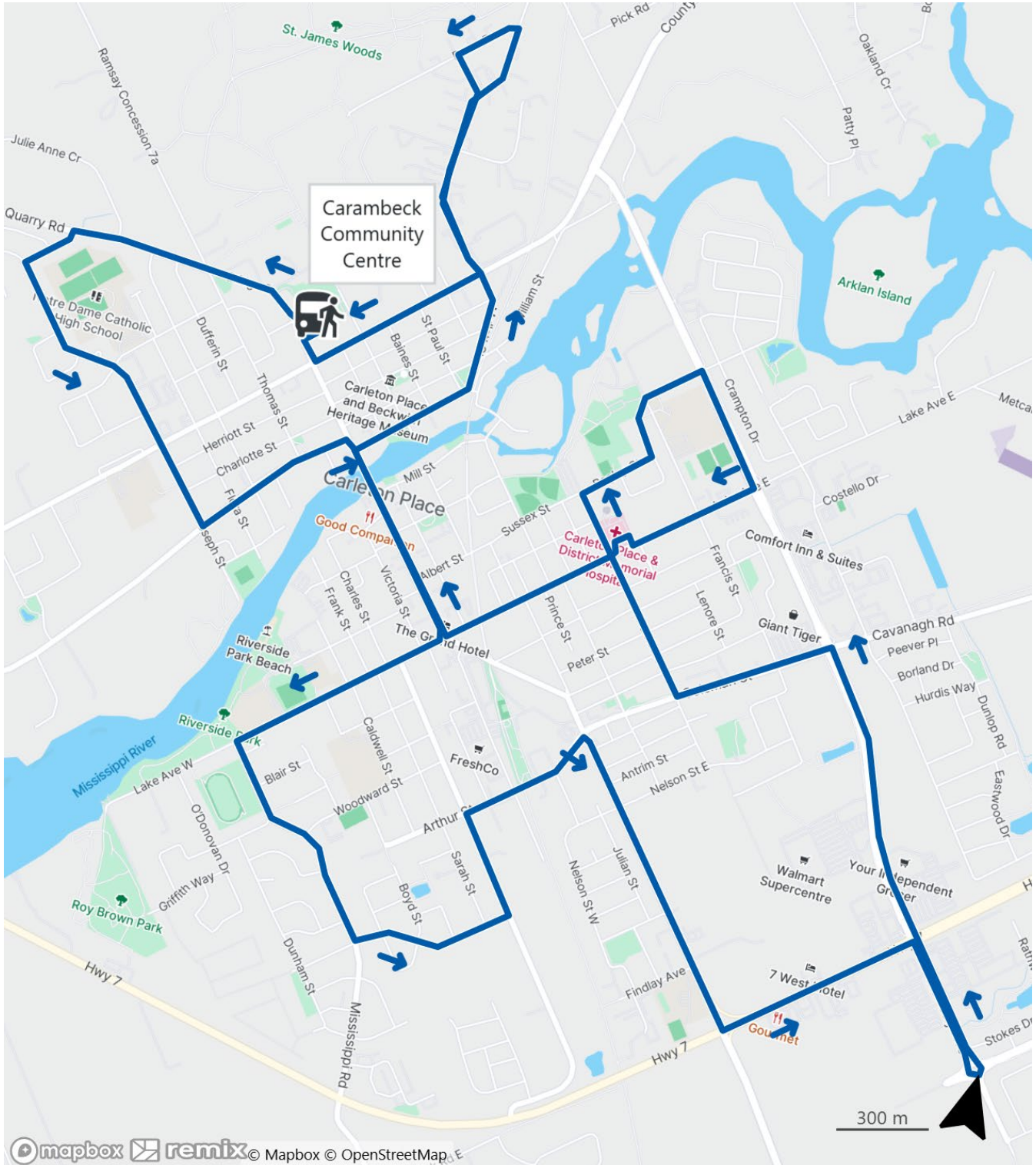
As part of the review, concepts were explored for fixed transit routes operating on a regular schedule. While this method of service design was not considered the best option for meeting community needs at launch, it could become necessary in the future. If the hourly demand exceeds the capacity of the current on-demand system, transitioning to fixed routes may be justified. This subsection presents various conceptual fixed routes that were considered over the course of the study and could be implemented, if demand warrants, in the future. All routes are subject to change based on observed data and requests from the community.

5.1.1 In-Town Fixed Routes

Fixed routes were developed for in-town travel within settlement areas and for intercommunity travel between major settlements. Routes travelling within settlement areas were designed to operate with an approximate cycle time of one hour in Carleton Place and Smiths Falls, with shorter cycle times for the smaller Perth and Almonte routes. As the town grows and continues to develop, particularly along Appleton Sideroad, the Almonte route could be expanded to fit an hourly cycle time and serve new developments.

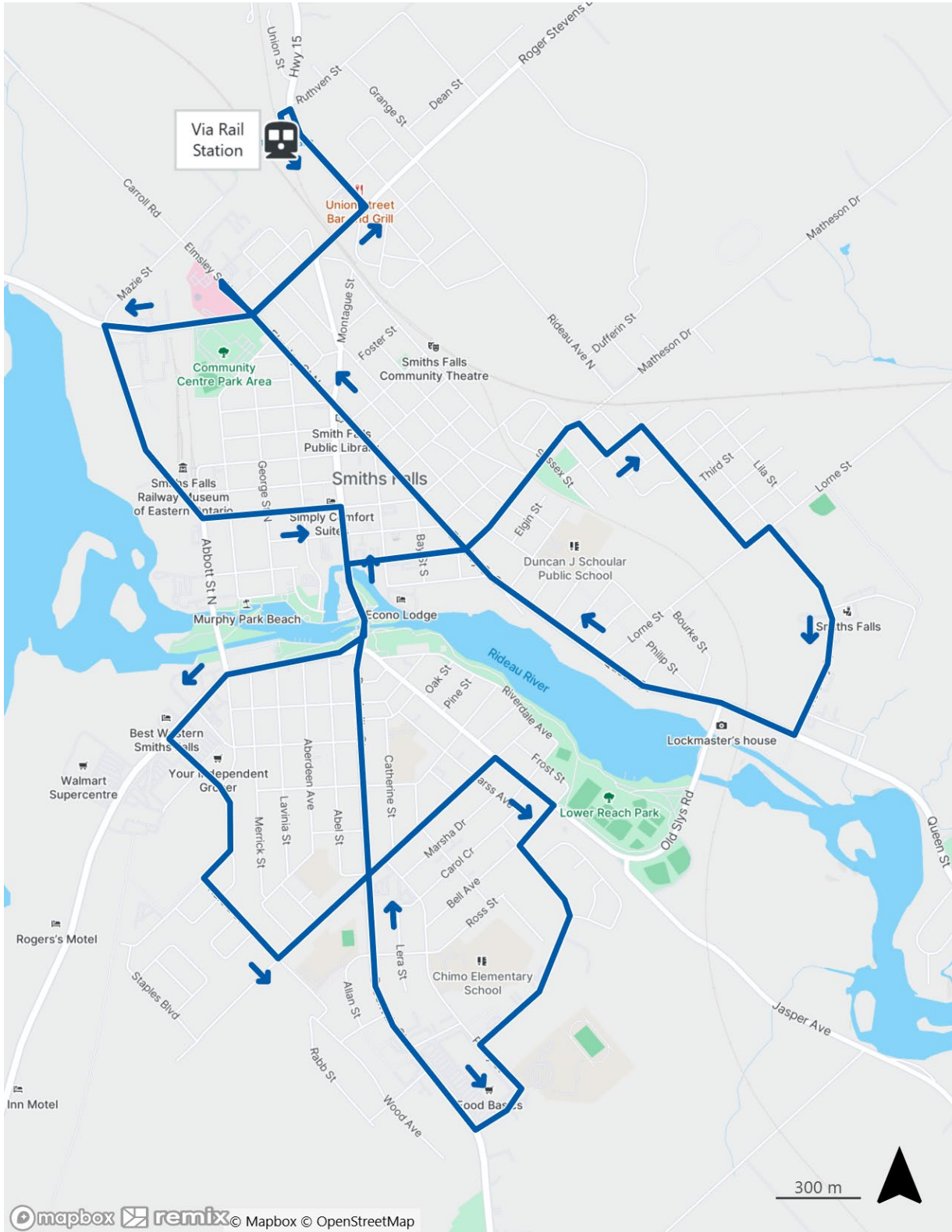
Service in **Carleton Place** could begin and end from the Carambeck Community Centre, which is also the proposed connection point for the Carleton Place-Ottawa regional route recommended by the Town of Carleton Place's transit study. The route would serve Bridge Street in downtown Carleton Place in either direction while crossing the river. Other key destinations served would include Carleton Place & District Memorial Hospital, the major supermarkets, the public and Catholic secondary schools, and Dunlop Industrial Park. This route would have an estimated cycle time of 54 minutes, allowing buses to operate on an hourly schedule. An overview of a potential local loop in Carleton Place is provided in Exhibit 5-1.

Exhibit 5-1: Potential Carleton Place In-Town Fixed Route



Service in **Smiths Falls** would begin and end from the Via Rail station in the north end of town, where riders could connect to trains bound for Ottawa or Brockville and Kingston. The route would serve Beckwith and Brockville Streets across either side of the river, thereby avoiding the use of swing bridges. Service would stop at the hospital twice, once on the way out from the Via station and once on the way back. A circuit of the Hershey Drive industrial area and Atironto subdivision would be completed after crossing back to the north side of the river. Major supermarkets, the arena, growth areas in the southwest of town, the Settlers Ridge Centre, Smiths Falls District C.I., and the downtown core would all be served. This route would have an estimated cycle time of 46 minutes, which would allow it to operate on an hourly schedule. If the route runs faster than initially anticipated, a 45-minute cycle time could be achievable. It is always advisable to test drive a route before finalizing its projected schedule. An overview of a potential local loop in Smiths Falls is provided in Exhibit 5-2.

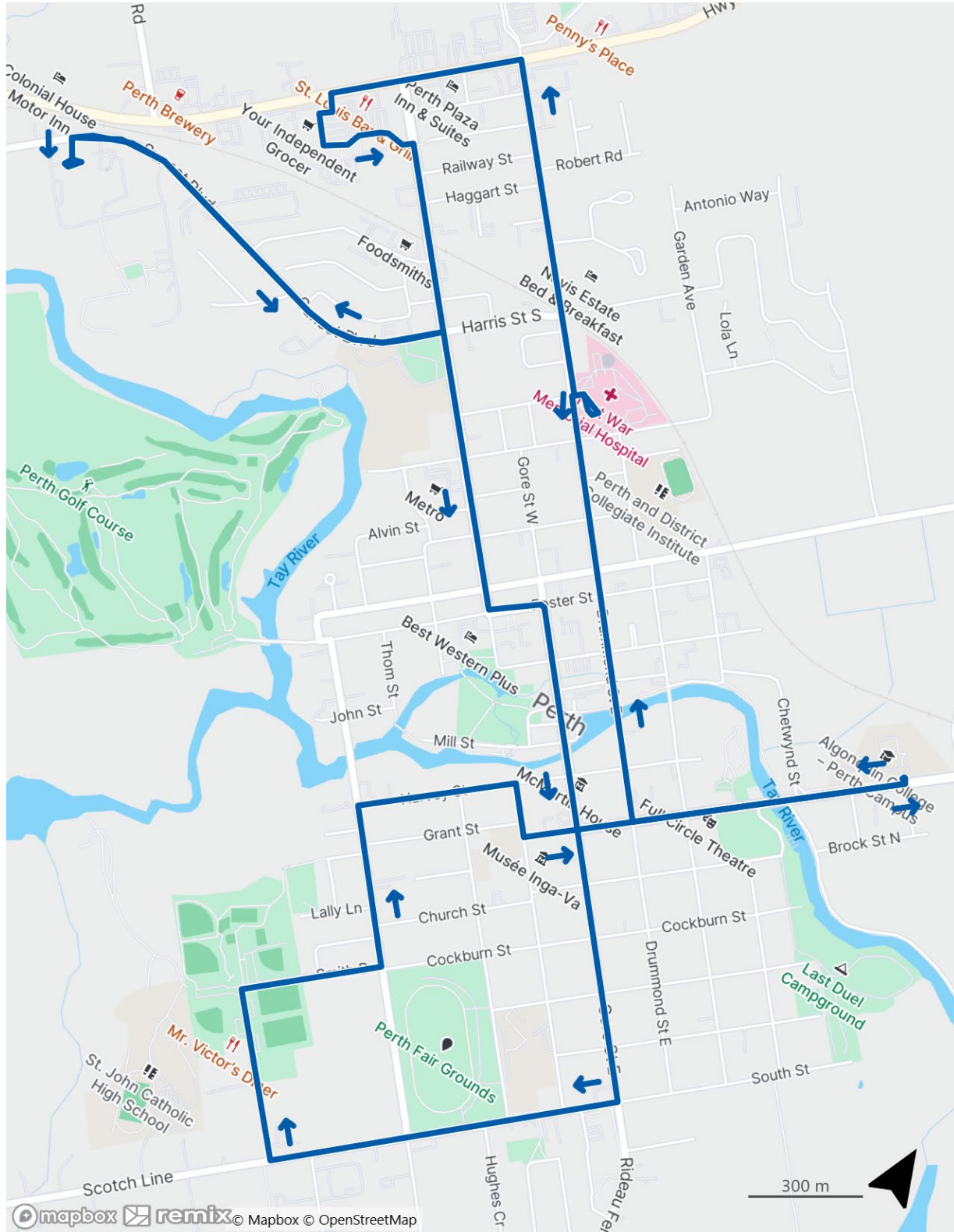
Exhibit 5-2: Potential Smiths Falls In-Town Fixed Route



Lanark & Smiths Falls Rural Transit Feasibility Study

Service in **Perth** would start and end from the Algonquin College campus, which could act as a major destination if the campus is ultimately able to be re-purposed for other educational or training uses. Service would run north on Drummond Street, stop at the hospital, then connect to the retail uses on Highway 7, Lanark Lodge on Sunset Boulevard, operate through the downtown core back across the river, then complete a circuit of the south side of town before returning to the college. Service could be extended to industrial uses south of South Street if a road connection were provided to remove some dead ends, or if the bus used a there-and-back route on Rogers Road and Warren Crescent, which has the largest turnaround cul-de-sac in the area. The route as indicated would have a cycle time of around 42 minutes, allowing it to run every 48 minutes or, with some extensions, every hour. 45-minute service could be achievable if the route operates faster than initially expected, similar to what is projected for Smiths Falls. A map of this conceptual route is shown in Exhibit 5-3.

Exhibit 5-3: Potential Perth In-Town Fixed Route



Service in **Almonte** would start and end at the Almonte General Hospital. It would cross the river and serve the downtown on Bridge Street, then complete a loop around the west side of town before proceeding back across the river on Main Street, travelling north on Union Street to serve Almonte District High School, then completing a circuit of some newer developments before returning to the hospital. As the town continues to expand along Appleton Sideroad, this loop could be lengthened to serve more growing neighbourhoods. The route as indicated would have a cycle time of around 40 minutes, allowing it to run every 45 minutes or, with some extensions, every hour. A map of this conceptual route is shown in Exhibit 5-4.

Exhibit 5-4: Potential Almonte In-Town Fixed Route



A Note on Cycle Time

The recommended headway, sometimes also known as frequency, of each of the in-town fixed routes described above is not the same as its estimated cycle time. This is because a transit route has an operating requirement known as layover or recovery time at the end of every trip. The purpose of this “extra” time is to allow the route to get back on schedule if it’s disrupted by

traffic or other factors and to allow the operator to use a washroom facility or take a short break before getting back on the road. Layover and recovery time requires a balance in setting the appropriate level: the more time is allowed, the less likely the bus is to be late, but this is also time that the bus is not serving riders. Industry standard guidelines suggest that layover and recovery time should not be less than 10% of the raw round trip cycle time. Using the example of the Almonte route, an estimated round trip of 40 minutes requires at least 4 (10%) minutes of recovery time, which is rounded up to 45 minutes to achieve a rounder number that is easier to remember and allow for greater contingency. A multiple of 5, 10, 15, 20, 30, or 60 minutes is known as a “clock face headway” and is often favoured by transit agencies to make their schedules easier to understand.

If fixed routes are implemented in the future, Lanark Transportation and the municipalities will want to keep this type of operational consideration in mind when designing and scheduling routes.

5.1.2 Intercommunity Fixed Routes

Fixed routes between communities, generally involving the four main settlement areas, were also considered prior to the recommendation of on-demand as the preferred service concept for the initial phase. Almonte-Carleton Place and Perth-Smiths Falls are the shortest intercommunity connections between settlement areas and also the most frequently travelled based on available data. These pairs would be relatively cost-effective to serve with a single vehicle compared to longer-haul trips. Connections from Carleton Place to either Perth or Smiths Falls would be longer and costlier to serve in comparison, while a Perth-Carleton Place could either travel via Balderson and Lanark Village, or remain on Highway 7.

The shorter routes of Perth-Smiths Falls and Almonte-Carleton Place are the likeliest candidates to be warranted for introduction if conventional transit between communities is pursued in the future. It is recommended that trip data from the on-demand service be used to track the number of trips going between these locations to determine if it would make sense to dedicate a vehicle to serving the connection. Data from on-demand trips could also be used to determine what those routes would look like and where they should stop within either community.

5.2 Long-Distance Regional Service

The priority for transit service in Lanark County and Smiths Falls was determined to be service within the County and Town’s boundaries. Service beyond the County’s boundaries could be

considered in a later phase if warranted by community requests. This subsection outlines potential destinations for regional routes if pursued by Lanark and Smiths Falls in the future.

The most prominent destination outside the County in terms of travel demand is **Ottawa**. As the largest city nearby, it represents a major potential destination for work, education, healthcare, and leisure trips. If service to Ottawa is pursued, the near-term western terminus of Ottawa's municipal rail network is Moodie Station, which was the recommended end point for the Carleton Place-Ottawa route referenced in the Carleton Place Transit Study and would accomplish similar goals as North Grenville's route to Limebank. In the longer term, as rail is extended further west towards Kanata and Stittsville, these would represent closer and more convenient places to turn around a bus from Lanark County. To attract more commuter trips, future Ottawa-based routes could stop at carpool lots on Highway 7 at Appleton Sideroad and Dwyer Hill Road or on Highway 15 at Richmond Road.

The City of Ottawa is currently pursuing an Integrated Regional Plan (IRP) in support of its application to the Canada Public Transit Fund, which may have implications for Lanark County. Three Lanark municipalities are part of Ottawa's metropolitan region according to Statistics Canada: Mississippi Mills, Carleton Place, and Beckwith.

Regional routes from Lanark County and Smiths Falls could also connect to other communities with notable travel demand. A review of available travel data indicated that there is significant pull from Mississippi Mills towards Renfrew County and from Smiths Falls towards the United Counties of Leeds & Grenville, suggesting demand along Highway 29 towards **Arnprior** and Highway 43 towards **Merrickville-Wolford** and **Kemptville** respectively. Further to the south, larger cities such as **Kingston** and **Brockville** represent communities with some travel demand from Lanark and Smiths Falls. These cities are currently reachable, but only by Via Rail.

Many of these destinations are too far from Lanark County and Smiths Falls for service to be funded entirely by the County and Town in any timeline. As noted in Section 4.2, the Ontario Transit Investment Fund (OTIF) encourages communities to collaborate on longer-distance transit solutions that recognize the way in which travel demand does not always stop at County boundaries. In the longer term, funding programs like OTIF could enable collaboration between Lanark and counties like Leeds & Grenville, Renfrew, and Frontenac on longer-distance routes. Provincial funding from OTIF is temporary, so a permanent funding agreement would ultimately be required between municipalities for this type of service to be sustainable.

5.3 Zero-Emissions Vehicles

As a long-term consideration that would require further analysis, Lanark and Smiths Falls could explore the opportunity to invest in zero emission vehicles or zero emission buses (ZEBs) for the proposed on-demand transit system. In addition to the Federal Rural Transit Solutions Fund for ZEBs, the Federal Zero Emission Transit Fund is a potential source of capital funding to purchase vehicles.

ZEBs primarily comprise two separate technologies: battery-electric buses (BEBs) and hydrogen fuel-cell buses (FCEBs). While FCEBs have superior range, they are affected by fueling costs, as hydrogen production is sensitive to economies of scale and is very expensive in small quantities. BEBs are the more common choice in an urban environment due to relative affordability and ease of implementation, but current BEB range may struggle to accommodate the length of trips that will be served by on-demand transit in a large service area like Lanark County, especially when factoring in degraded performance in cold weather conditions.

Hybrid vehicles, which are widely available as light-duty consumer vehicles like the minivans used by Lanark Transportation, could represent a viable interim step to reduce fuel consumption. Hybrid vehicles generally cost more to purchase than gas-powered vehicles, so a higher up-front investment would be needed to achieve the operational savings and lower fuel consumption. Hybrid or electric vehicles would require charging locations, both when parked and potentially to top up their charge while waiting for trip requests. This would ideally take place at a location that's central to many user trips such as Carleton Place, Smiths Falls, Perth, Almonte, or Lanark Village, as this wouldn't take a vehicle out of its way. The electric vehicle charging station at the Crystal Palace parking lot in downtown Perth is one such example.

ZEB technology and best practices are quickly evolving, and further study would be required to properly assess if or which ZEB technology would be feasible for the proposed on-demand transit service in the near or longer term.

6 Conclusion

The study has shown that the most practical design for public transportation in Lanark County and Smiths Falls is an **on-demand transit system**. This approach leverages advanced dispatching and booking software and would be delivered by **Lanark Transportation**. Lanark Transportation has the local knowledge and resources to continue to deliver service in this area. Given Lanark County's expansive and dispersed area, along with the decentralized travel patterns of its residents, on-demand transit is best suited to address the community's transportation needs by deploying vehicles exactly where and when they are needed.

The service can take advantage of available funding sources, such as federal and provincial grants, to fund improvements to the system. The Rural Transit Solutions Fund can be leveraged as a capital funding source for on-demand software and vehicle fleet. For operating funding, it is recommended to continue to leverage Gas Tax funding and to consider applying to the Ontario Transit Investment Fund (OTIF) to provide temporary relief of any increase in overall operating costs.

Introducing an on-demand transit system presents a **compelling opportunity to enhance community mobility** by offering convenient and flexible travel options for residents catering to the varying needs of the community. This approach utilizes the existing non-profit service provider, Lanark Transportation to minimize expansion costs and provide a familiar provider for the community. By removing barriers to transportation, this service can act as a solution to many challenges that face seniors, students, workers, and equity-deserving communities, opening up access to economic opportunities and critical resources and facilities dispersed throughout the region. Existing users of Lanark Transportation will benefit through an improved trip-booking platform, making the service user-friendly.

Starting with an on-demand system will also give the County and Town an opportunity to identify the need and demand to further strengthen transit services in the region, and allows the service to grow at its own pace. In developing the service, Lanark County will need to consider the following in the short-term:

- The level of investment to make in the service, including what fares would be charged per trip. Fares can range from the current fixed rate per km to distance-based travel zones.

Lanark & Smiths Falls Rural Transit Feasibility Study

Different fare solutions will require subsidy levels and may make the service more attractive to new users.

- Marketing any new service offerings
- Ensuring there is a plan in place to monitor key aspects the service, to allow the County to proactively adjust service offerings and potentially plan for long-term changes.

In the long-term, this may enable provision of fixed service routes along key corridors if demand warrants, or regional transit connections to key destinations outside of the County's boundaries.

Appendix A

Engagement Summary

Draft Report

Engagement Summary

**Rural Transit Feasibility Study for Lanark County and
the Town of Smiths Falls**

Prepared for Lanark County and the Town of Smiths Falls
Prepared by Arcadis Professional Services (Canada) Inc.

September 10, 2025



Draft Report: **Engagement**

Rural Transit Feasibility Study for Lanark County and the Town of Smiths Falls

Version Control

Issue	Revision No.	Date Issued	Page No.	Description	Reviewed By
v 0.1		2025-04-11			MJ
v 1.0		2025-08-01			AG
v 2.0		2025-09-10			AD

Contents

- 1 Introduction 1**
 - 1.1 Report Purpose and Outline 1
 - 1.2 Study Context..... 1
 - 1.3 Engagement Overview 1
- 2 Round 1 Engagement 2**
 - 2.1 Study Webpage 2
 - 2.2 Public Information-Sharing Event 1 2
 - 2.3 Public Opinion Survey 1 5
 - 2.4 Stakeholder Meeting 1..... 12
 - 2.5 Summary of Input Received 13
- 3 Round 2 Engagement 15**
 - 3.1 Public Information-Sharing Events 2 16
 - 3.2 Public Opinion Survey 2 16
 - 3.3 Stakeholder Meeting 2..... 28
 - 3.4 Summary of Input Received 28

1 Introduction

Lanark County, with support from the Town of Smiths Falls, is undertaking a Rural Transit Feasibility Study to explore the suitability of introducing new public transit and transportation services. Thorough public and stakeholder engagement is critical to understanding the mobility needs of residents and meaningfully responding to the unique and diverse needs and opportunities in the County and Town.

1.1 Report Purpose and Outline

This Engagement Summary serves as a record and summary of the consultation and engagement undertaken across the length of the study.

This introductory section provides an overview of study engagement objectives. The following sections are structured as follows:

- Section 2 provides an overview of Round 1 Engagement, including the various activities conducted for the public and stakeholders; and
- Section 3 provides an overview of Round 2 Engagement, including the various activities conducted for the public and stakeholders.

1.2 Study Context

The Rural Transit Feasibility Study was initiated in April 2025 and is conducted across four phases:

- Phase 1: Existing Conditions Review;
- Phase 2: Transit Solutions Planning;
- Phase 3: Transit Governance Strategy; and
- Phase 4: Project Reporting.

Customized communication and engagement activities coincide with the first two phases of the study, and a presentation to the Councils of Lanark County and Smiths Falls on the study recommendations will take place at the completion of Phase 4.

1.3 Engagement Overview

Two rounds of engagement were completed during the course of the Rural Transit Feasibility Study, with the following broad purpose:

- **Round 1 Engagement:** Introduce the study purpose and goals to the public and key stakeholders; gather input to identify and assess transit options, travel needs and demand for services, transit opportunities, and priorities across Lanark County and Smiths Falls to inform and direct expected outcomes.
- **Round 2 Engagement:** Present draft transit scenarios and gather feedback about how well these transit scenarios meet the travel needs of residents and visitors across Lanark County and Smiths Falls.

2 Round 1 Engagement

This section summarises the objectives and activities conducted as part of the first round of engagement, coinciding with Phase 1 of the Rural Transit Feasibility Study.

Meaningful engagement helps to ensure that the options developed and assessed in later phases of the study respond to the identified needs and take advantage of available opportunities. Round 1 made use of several tools to encourage engagement and solicit input, which included the following:

- Study webpage (Section 2.1);
- Public Information-Sharing Event 1 (Section 2.2);
- Display board used in person and posted online (Section 2.2.1); and
- Public Opinion Survey 1 (Section 2.3).

2.1 Study Webpage

A study webpage was launched as lanarkcounty.ca/transit in May 2025 as the online community engagement portal for the Rural Transit Feasibility Study. The objectives of this web page are as follows:

- To provide a summary of the study contact information;
- To provide information/notice of public engagement events;
- To host/link to the online survey; and
- To link to study documentation and reporting, as appropriate.

2.2 Public Information-Sharing Event 1

The first round of public consultation was held in-person as a public information-sharing drop-in event with the purpose of introducing the Rural Transit Feasibility Study to the public and soliciting feedback about existing transit options and needs for services.

Draft Report: **Engagement**

Rural Transit Feasibility Study for Lanark County and the Town of Smiths Falls

The information sharing “pop-ups” took place at multiple venues and times to broaden outreach, as follows:

- Town Hall, 77 Beckwith Street North, Smiths Falls – May 21, 2025, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
- Perth and District Pool, 3 Sunset Boulevard, Perth – May 21, 2025, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.
- Almonte Library, 155 High Street, Mississippi Mills – May 22, 2025, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

The drop-in sessions were well attended by members of the public, as well as a member of Council from the Town of Smiths Falls. A promotional sign board used to market the event is included in Exhibit 2.1. Two members of the consultant project team (including both the Technical Lead and Engagement Lead) were available during the entirety of the three public events. Key staff leading the Rural Transit Feasibility Study from Lanark County and the Town of Smiths Falls also attended selected drop-in events.

Project team members actively engaged and conversed with the public, listening to their transit-related priorities, concerns and location-based input to help inform the service network components in the next phase of the study. A summary of the input heard during the drop-in sessions is included in Section 2.5. Attendees were also encouraged to share their input via the online survey, in addition to engaging directly with members of the project team.

Exhibit 2.1: Promotional Sign Board Featured Outside the Perth and District Pool



2.2.1 Display Boards

A display board was developed to introduce the Rural Transit Feasibility Study to the public and stakeholders. A map of the region was predominately displayed to encourage location-based input on transit-related needs and opportunities. The display board was also posted as a PDF file on the project web page for asynchronous participation and is shown in Exhibit 2.2.

Exhibit 2.2: Public Information-Sharing Event 1 – Display Board

LANARK COUNTY AND TOWN OF SMITHS FALLS

RURAL TRANSIT FEASIBILITY STUDY

LANARK COUNTY **SMITHS FALLS**
RISE AT THE FALLS


Lanark County and the Town of Smiths Falls are undertaking the Rural Transit Feasibility Study to explore the potential of new public transit services through both a technical and engagement-focused process. The study is key to understanding the mobility needs of residents, as well as meaningfully responding to the challenges and opportunities across the region.

The study is being conducted across four phases. Currently, we are seeking your help to identify travel needs and demand for services, as well as transit priorities and opportunities. Transit can take several forms, including fixed routes and schedules or on-demand (typically a shared ride transportation service).

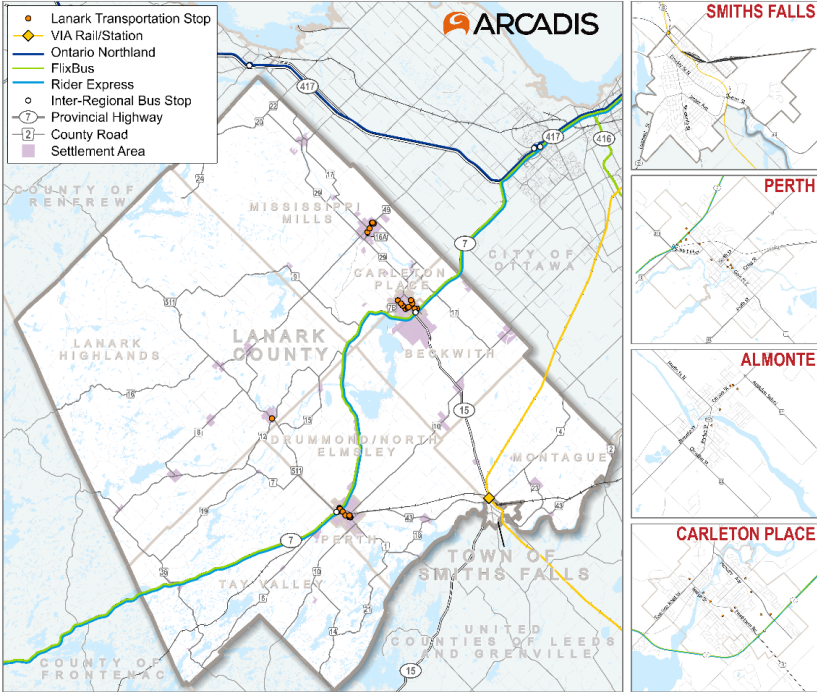
Your input will assist us in developing the transit solutions that will best support the residents of Lanark County and Smiths Falls. A second round of public engagement will take place this summer, during which we will present transit options for the community to review and provide feedback.

STUDY PHASES

① Existing Conditions Review	NOW
② Transit Solutions Planning	JUNE
③ Transit Governance Strategy	JULY
④ Project Reporting	SEPT

 **Share your input.**
Complete the survey online.

lanarkcounty.ca/transit



2.3 Public Opinion Survey 1

The survey questionnaire asked a total of 11 questions, including multiple-choice questions, multi-select questions and free-text questions about public transit across the region. A total of 513 survey responses were received – 482 online survey submissions and 31 hardcopy submissions.

Participants were asked to report the first three digits of their home postal code (forward sortation area). Exhibit 2.3 illustrates the responses – nearly 40% of respondents reside in Smiths Falls (K7A), followed by 18% of respondents from Perth (K7H). Survey participants were also asked to identify if they live in an urban or rural setting. Exhibit 2.4 illustrates the responses – 50% of respondents live in an urban area and 43% in a rural setting. Exhibit 2.5 illustrates the proportion of survey respondents by age cohort – the most represented age groups are 65 to 74 (22%) and 35 to 44 (19%).

Exhibit 2.3: Survey Respondent Location Distribution

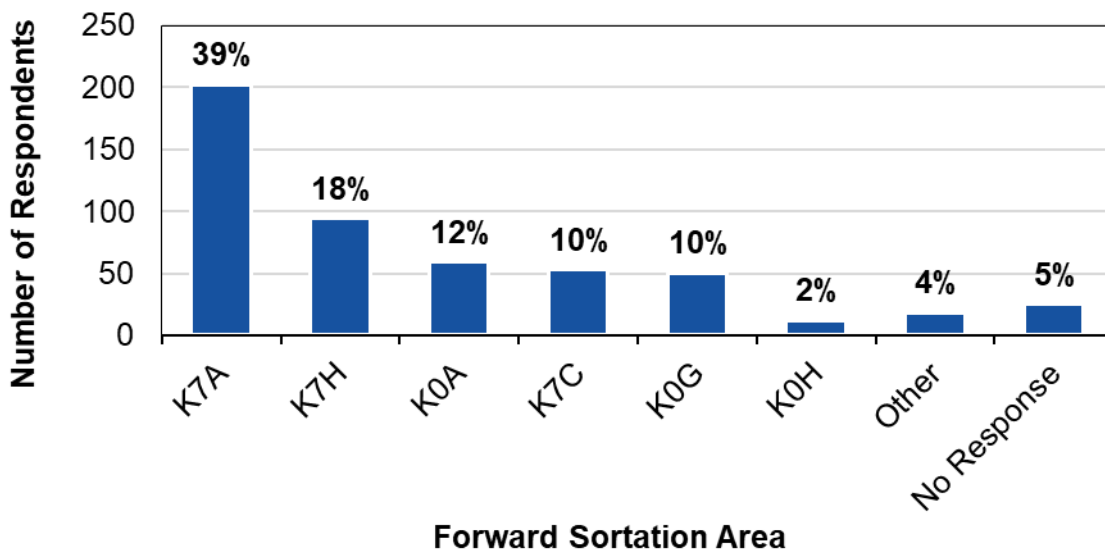


Exhibit 2.4: Survey Respondent Location Distribution – Urban vs. Rural

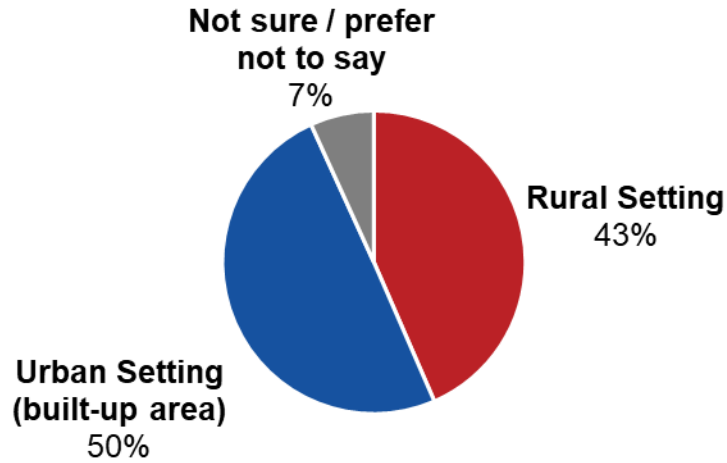
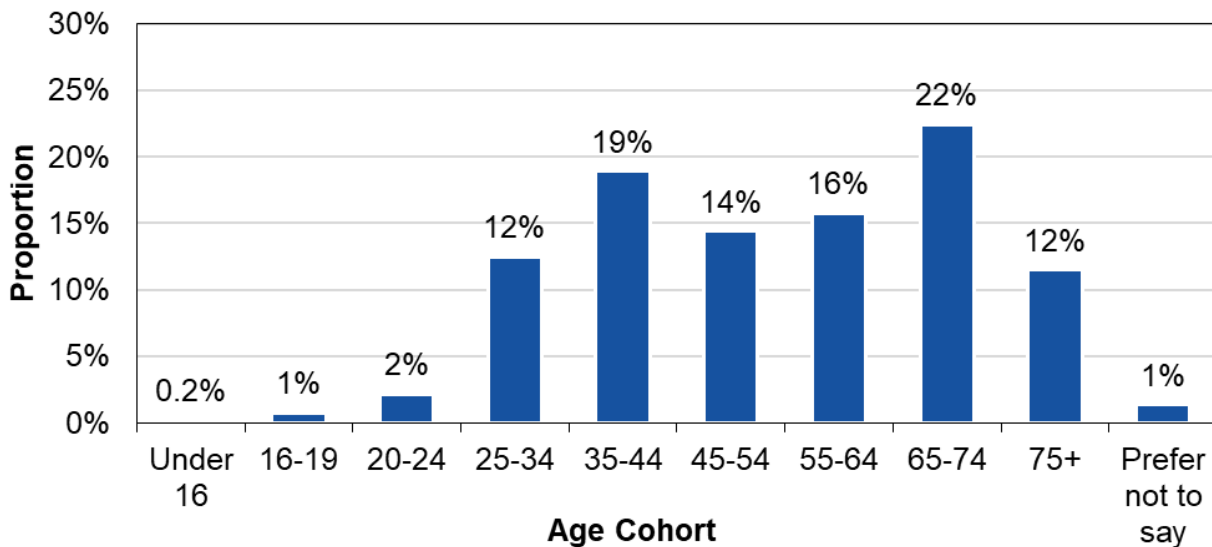


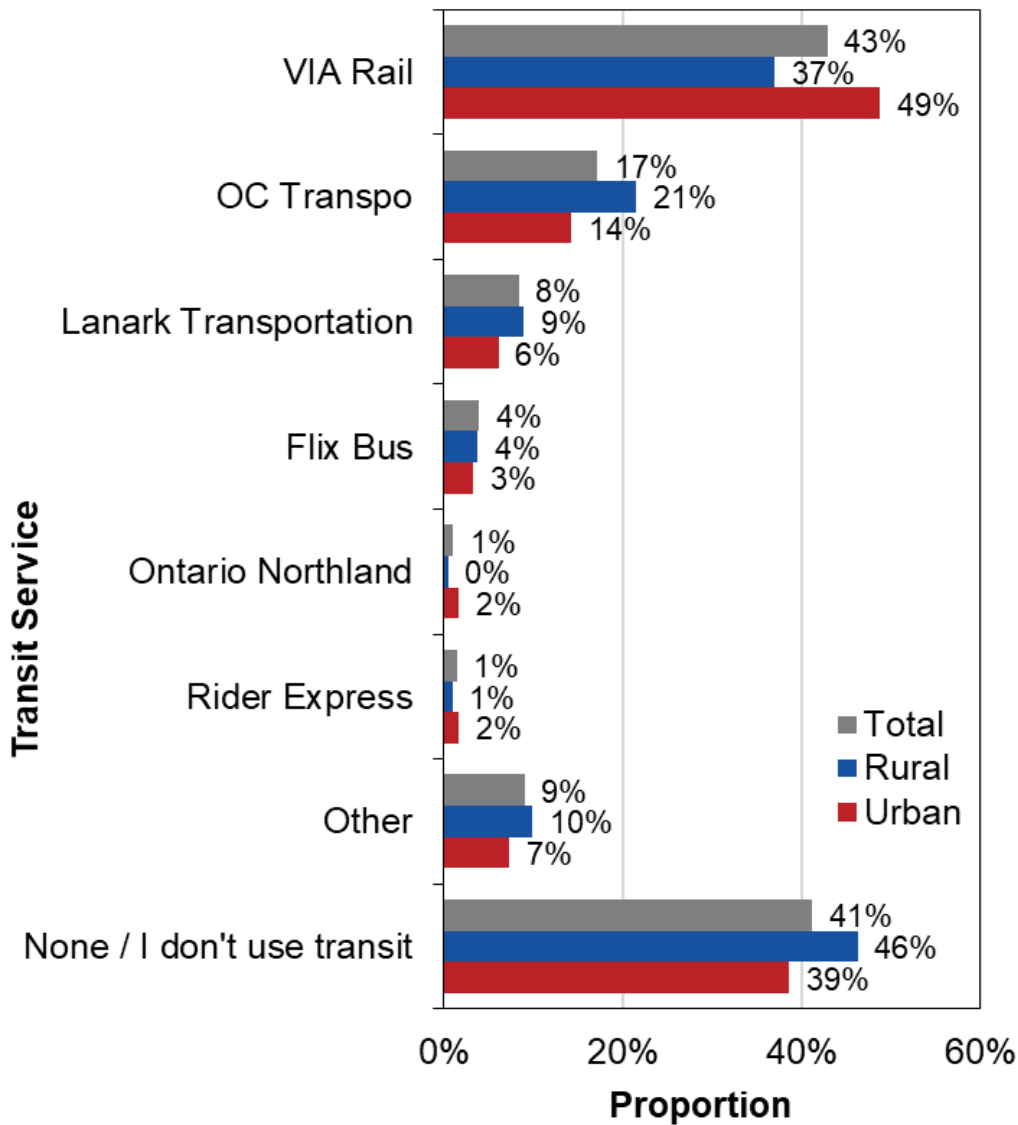
Exhibit 2.5: Survey Participation by Age Cohort



Survey participants were asked, “Which of the following transit services in the region have you used in the past two years?” Results are summarised in Exhibit 2.6.

Exhibit 2.6: Response to Past Transit Use

Which of the following transit services in the region have you used in the past two years? (select all that apply)

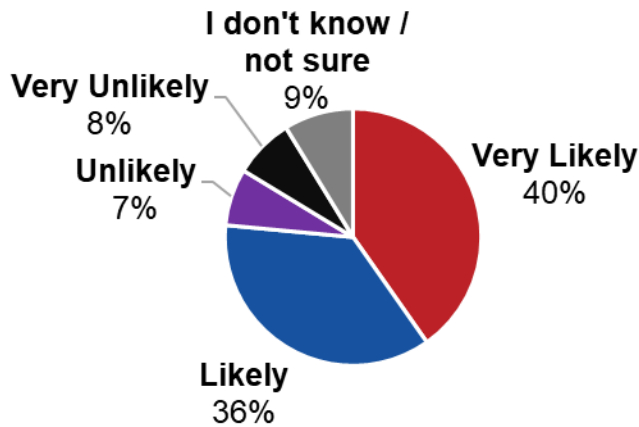


Survey participants were asked, “If a public transit service was available to use across Lanark County and Smiths Falls, how likely are you to use it?” Responses for urban and rural respondents are summarised in Exhibit 2.7.

Exhibit 2.7: Response to Future Transit Use

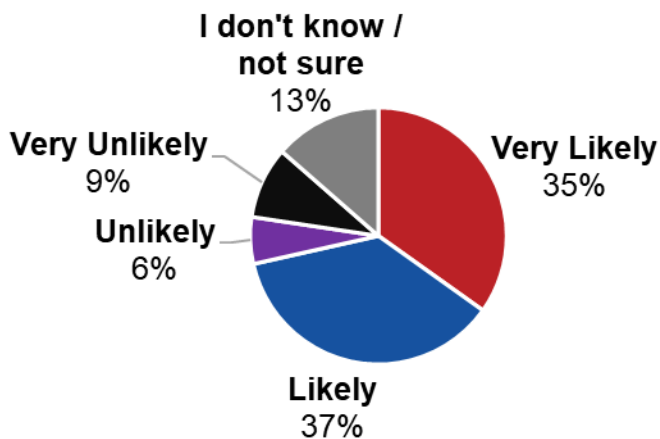
Urban Setting Respondents

If a public transit service was available to use across Lanark County and Smiths Falls, how likely are you to use it?



Rural Setting Respondents

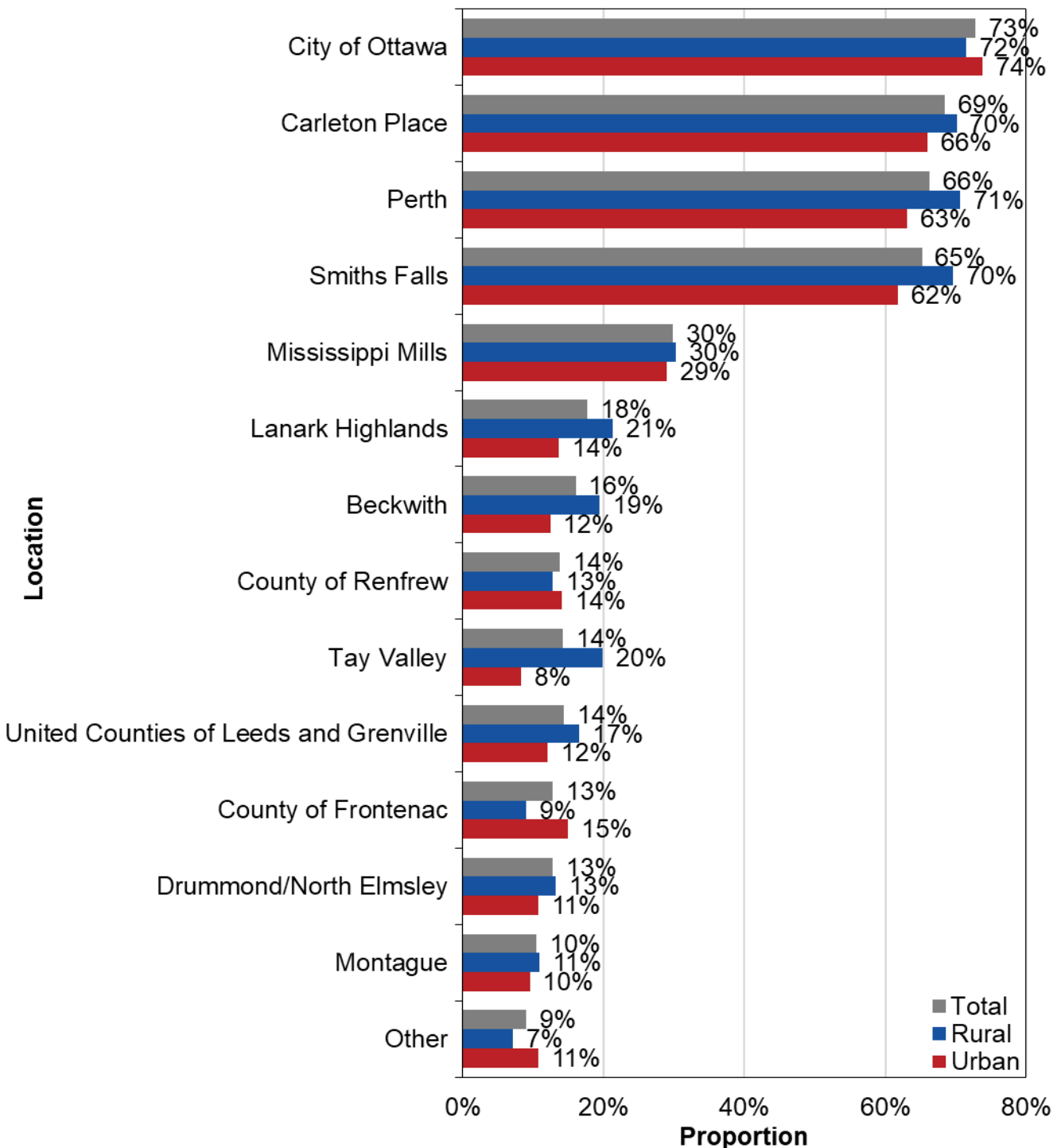
If a public transit service was available to use across Lanark County and Smiths Falls, how likely are you to use it?



Survey participants were asked, “**If a public transit service was available to use across Lanark County and Smiths Falls, what locations would you be interested in travelling to by transit?**” Responses are summarised in Exhibit 2.8.

Exhibit 2.8: Response to Transit Connections

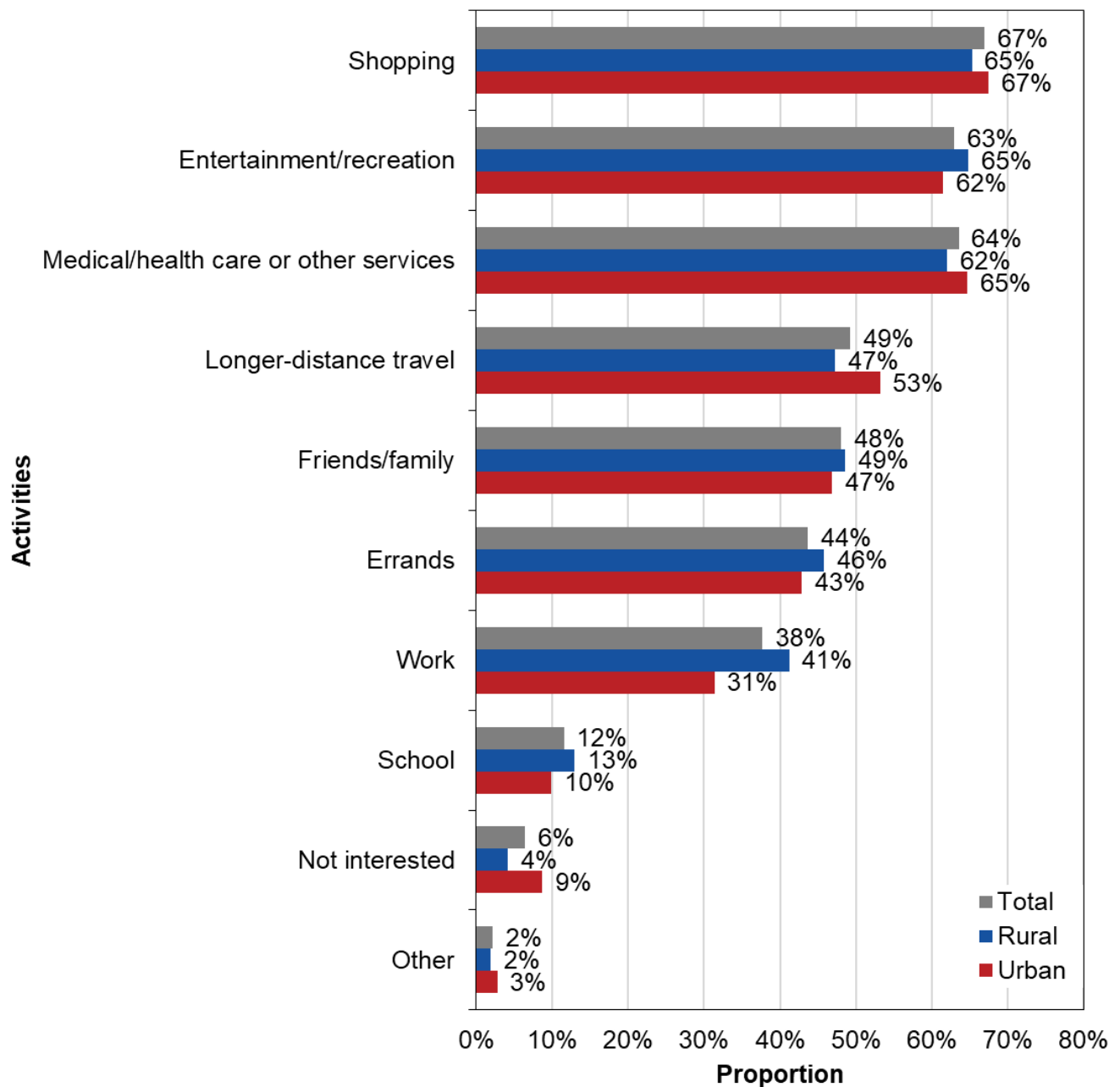
**If a public transit service was available to use across Lanark County and Smiths Falls, what locations would you be interested in travelling to by transit?
(select all that apply)**



Survey participants were asked, “**What types of activities would you be most interested in using public transit to travel to, if transit was available in the future?**” Responses are summarised in Exhibit 2.9.

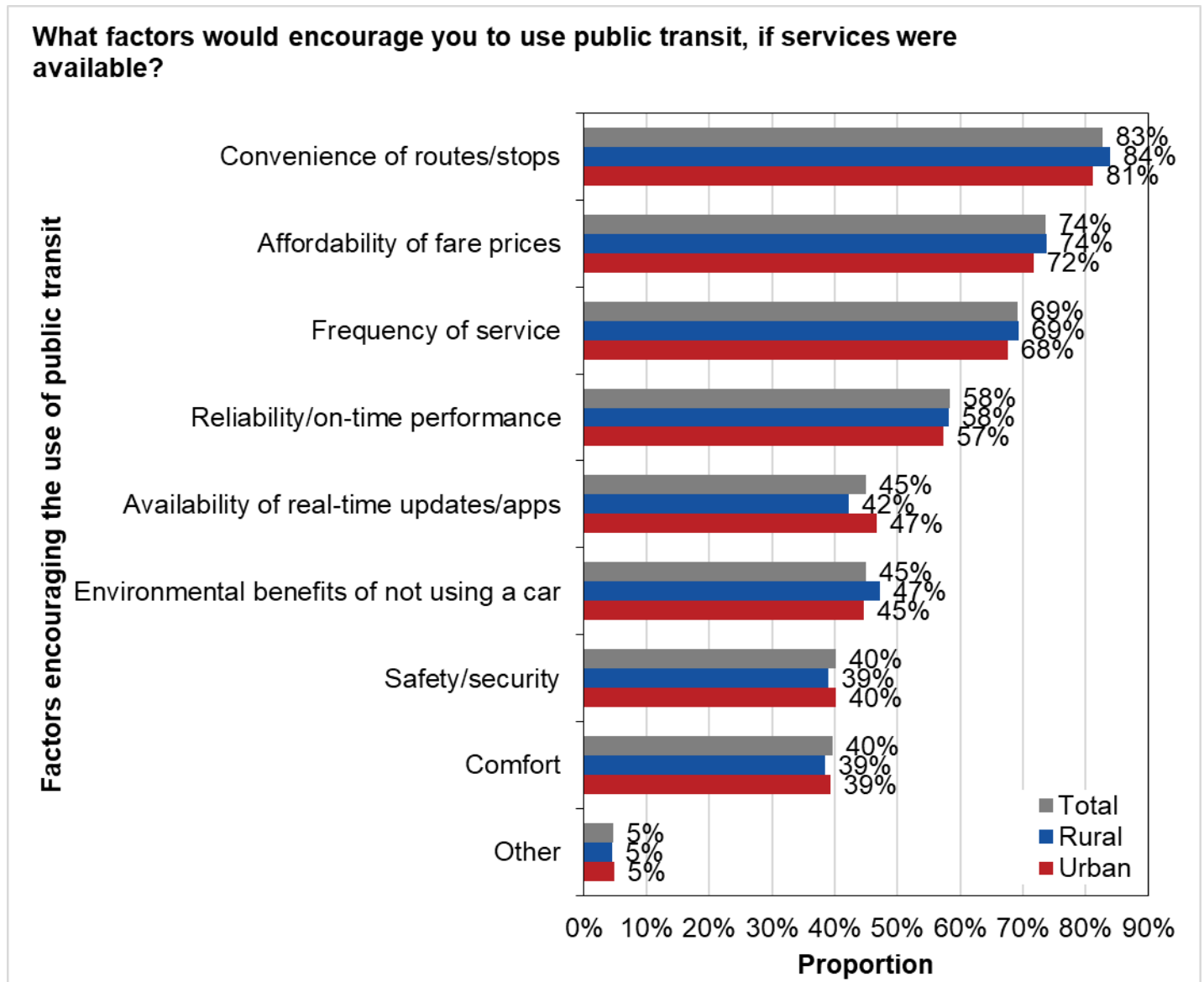
Exhibit 2.9: Response to Transit Used to Access Activities

What types of activities would you be most interested in using public transit to travel to, if transit was available in the future? (Select all that apply)



Survey participants were asked, “**What factors would encourage you to use public transit, if services were available?**” Responses are summarised in Exhibit 2.10.

Exhibit 2.10: Response to Factors to Encourage Transit Use



Survey participants were also asked, “**Please share any comments about existing transit needs, as well as any suggestions on how best to expand transit options for residents in Lanark County and Smiths Falls.**” A summary of the key themes expressed through responses to this free-form question are summarised, as follows:

- **Need for improved and expanded transit options:** Strong consensus on the need for improved public transit options. Many respondents express the necessity for better transit services within and between settlements including Carleton Place, Perth and Smiths Falls, as well as external connections to Ottawa.
- **Affordability and accessibility:** Affordability is a key concern, especially for older adults and those on fixed incomes. Many respondents identified the high cost of taxis and the lack of affordable transportation as barriers. Accessibility for people with disabilities and older adults is also highlighted as a critical aspect of any new transit system.
- **Convenience and frequency:** The need for regular, reliable and frequent transit service is a key theme noted by survey respondents, who mention the need for transit to meet daily needs including shopping, medical appointments and commuting.
- **Connection to major transit hubs:** Some respondents noted the desire for connectivity to major transit hubs including VIA Rail and the Ottawa airport. Providing transit access would also support tourism and economic growth in the region.
- **Support for non-drivers:** Survey respondents highlighted the challenges faced by non-drivers (including those who are visually impaired or elderly) in accessing essential services and activities. Public transit is seen as a means to provide independence and reduce isolation for these groups.
- **Environmental and economic benefits:** Some respondents noted the potential environmental benefits of reducing car usage and the economic advantages of making the broader region more attractive for residents and visitors through better transit options.
- **Integration with existing systems:** There is interest in integrating new transit services with existing systems to enhance coverage and effectiveness. Learning from successful models in other regions is suggested as a way to improve local transit offerings.

Overall, survey respondents are supportive of transit to improve access and connectivity across Lanark County and Smiths Falls to improve quality of life, economic opportunities, and environmental sustainability.

2.4 Stakeholder Meeting 1

The first round of stakeholder consultation was hosted as a workshop to elicit input from a broader range of representatives. The in-person event was held on May 22, 2025, at the Lanark County Council Chambers in Perth. This event followed a World Café format, where participants were seated at different tables and asked a total of five broad questions for discussion. Panelists and tables were shuffled at the beginning of each question, ensuring a variety of discussion groups and perspectives.

More than two dozen participants attended the event, including representatives from Lanark Transportation Association as well as others from various social services and economic development services groups.

2.5 Summary of Input Received

A detailed summary of the input expressed by members of the public during in-person conversations, as well as input received by stakeholders as part of Stakeholder Meeting 1, is as follows:

Accessibility

- Smiths Falls has the second highest amount of people with disabilities and on ODSP in Ontario (after Hamilton).
- Entire transit fleet needs to be accessible for users with mobility aids (including powered).
- Transit vehicles need to have adequate space to accommodate users with mobility issues and mobility devices.
- Transit is a major barrier to residents with physical disabilities, as some depend on employment opportunities only available outside of Smiths Falls but have no access.
- Lack of transit can make living in Smiths Falls feel like a land-locked community, with diminished quality of life, and restricted access to social and employment opportunities.
- Considerations for winter maintenance (i.e. snow removal) of bus stops are important.

Transit would be a lifeline for me and open opportunities. – *Smith Falls resident*

Accessibility for disabled people does not exclude able-bodied people, but accessibility for able-bodied people excludes disabled people. – *Smith Falls resident*

Age

- Aging in place is a priority among many residents, and transit is needed to support those aging out of driving.
- *Age Friendly North Lanark*: The World Health Organization identifies eight domains to support age-friendly communities and aging in place, and transportation is one of them.
- Transit can help to attract retirees and younger families to move to the County

If transit doesn't happen, I have to leave Lanark County – Perth resident

What's good for an 80-year-old is good for an 8-year-old. – Almonte resident

Existing Transportation

- Conventional taxicab service is not ideal to travel across the Town and County based on availability and cost. Taxis are only available on certain days of the week and only connect to larger settlement area.
- Specialised transit service is limiting because of eligibility requirements, and if not covered by ODSP, it's very expensive.

No transit is an economic disincentive. – Smith Falls resident

Transit must be accessible, affordable and available. – Smith Falls resident

Key Internal Transit Connections:

- Connections both within settlement areas and between settlement areas are equally important.
- Settlements have different services (e.g. banking, medical, pharmacies, methadone clinic, dental, Walmart, grocers, bars, recreation centres), so connections between the settlements is important for residents to access critical services.
- Other key locations to connect include Smith Falls and District High School, VIA Rail Station, hospitals and other medical services (Perth, Smiths Falls, Almonte and Carleton Place), employment areas, downtowns, foodbanks, court services, community housing.
- Smiths Falls has a "static footprint" – connections needed to other communities to open opportunities for residents and visitors.
- Considerations for the shift change at Tweed factory are important.

Key External Transit Connections

- Service to connect to OC Transpo.
- Connections to Brockville (major dental services used by County/Town residents, major industry/workers).
- Connections to Kingston.
- Connections to Ottawa: Canadian Tire Centre, downtown, Ottawa airport, Stittsville, Kanata.

Draft Report: **Engagement**

Rural Transit Feasibility Study for Lanark County and the Town of Smiths Falls

- Connections to La Coccinelle (francophone daycare) from Ottawa are needed to support access of staff needed for centre. Currently, the economic opportunities are limited for the daycare (i.e. hiring staff, expanded services) due to the lack of transit.

I see this study as the start of something bigger. First, connections in the County/Town – then connections to Ottawa, Brockville and beyond.
– *Smiths Falls resident*

Other Considerations

- Transit service needed, especially to support international students, temporary foreign workers, new Canadians, parents with children as well as single parents with little support.
- Transit service needed to discourage impaired driving.
- Barriers and considerations in transportation include price of gas, cost of vehicle ownership (including insurance and maintenance costs), safety.
- Look to Kings County Transit in Annapolis Valley for inspiration.
- "Rural" Transit Feasibility Study is misleading if the study is focused on the needs of urban residents; outreach should be happening across rural settlements.
- *Climate Protection Working Group* prefers to see on-demand paired with fixed routes.
- The County's *Climate Action Plan* conducted a survey on commuting (2023) that can be leverage to inform travel demand.
- An electric vehicle fleet is critical.
- Survey wording suggests that that conventional transit is preferred (i.e. "convenience of routes/stops").
- Fare cost and connectivity are equally important.
- Social housing communities should be engaged in the needs/priorities process.
- Development of 500-600 homes in Almonte underway by Minto, along Appleton Sideroad.
- Transit is needed to help open development opportunities in Almonte, which are constrained due to lack of parking availability. Transit would reduce parking demand.

3 Round 2 Engagement

The second round of engagement took place in August of 2025 and centred around the subject of on-demand transit, which was determined to be the best way to serve Lanark County given financial constraints and the challenge of the County's dispersed population across a substantial land area. Stakeholders and members of the public were asked questions related

to the subject of support for on-demand transit and how such a service could be designed for Lanark County and Smiths Falls. The study webpage was updated to promote this second phase of engagement. As was the case with the first round of engagement, input was collected through three public pop-up sessions, a stakeholder workshop, and a public-facing survey.

3.1 Public Information-Sharing Events 2

The second round of public consultation was held in a similar drop-in event format as the first round, with the purpose of introducing the concept of on-demand transit to the community and soliciting feedback about how it should be designed and operated if it is pursued by Lanark and Smiths Falls.

The information sharing “pop-ups” took place at the following venues and times across the study area:

- Perth Library, 30 Harriott Street, Perth – August 12, 2025, 12:30 to 2:30 p.m.
- Almonte Library, 155 High Street, Mississippi Mills – August 12, 2025, 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- Town Hall, 77 Beckwith Street North, Smiths Falls – August 13, 2025, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

The drop-in sessions were well attended by members of the public, as well as the Mayor of Smiths Falls. Promotional sign boards were used to advertise the events. Two members of the consultant project team (including the Technical Lead) were available during the entirety of the three public events. Key staff from the Town of Smiths Falls also attended the Smiths Falls-based drop-in event.

Project team members actively engaged and conversed with the public, listening to their transit-related priorities, concerns and location-based input to help inform the ideal parameters of an on-demand transportation service in Lanark County and Smiths Falls. A summary of the input heard during the drop-in sessions is included in Section 3.4. Attendees were also encouraged to share their input via the online survey, in addition to engaging directly with members of the project team.

3.2 Public Opinion Survey 2

The second public opinion survey was active from August 5 to August 29, 2025, and asked a total of 15 questions, including multiple-choice questions, multi-select questions and free-text questions about on-demand public transit across the region. A total of 109 survey responses were received, representing a lower response rate than the first public survey.

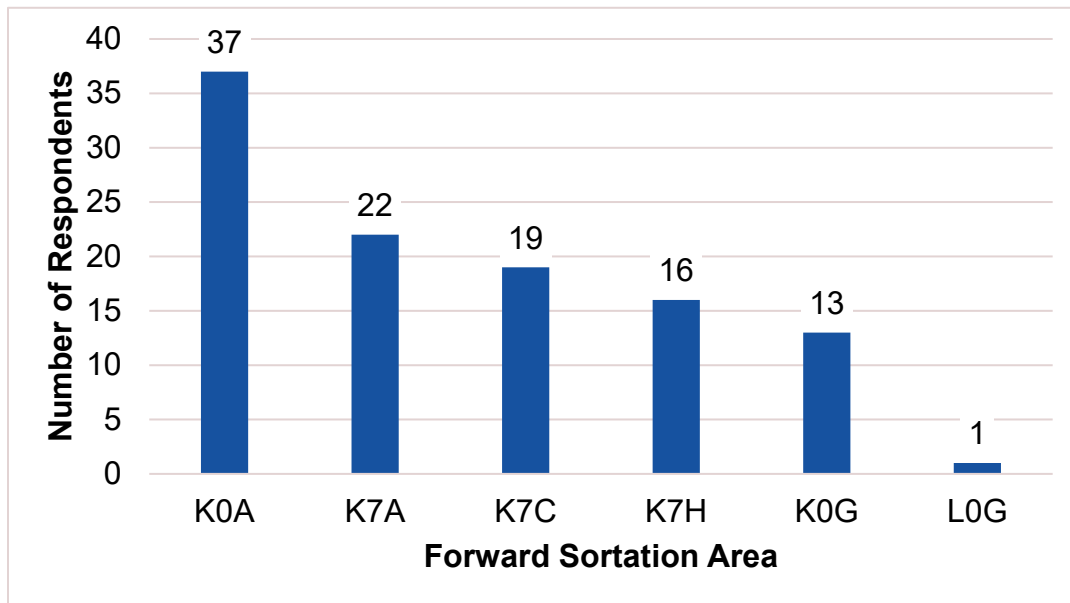
Participants were asked to report the first three digits of their home postal code (forward sortation area). In contrast to the first public survey, the highest number of respondents live in forward sortation area K0A, which represents a portion of Mississippi Mills west of the river, as

Draft Report: **Engagement**

Rural Transit Feasibility Study for Lanark County and the Town of Smiths Falls

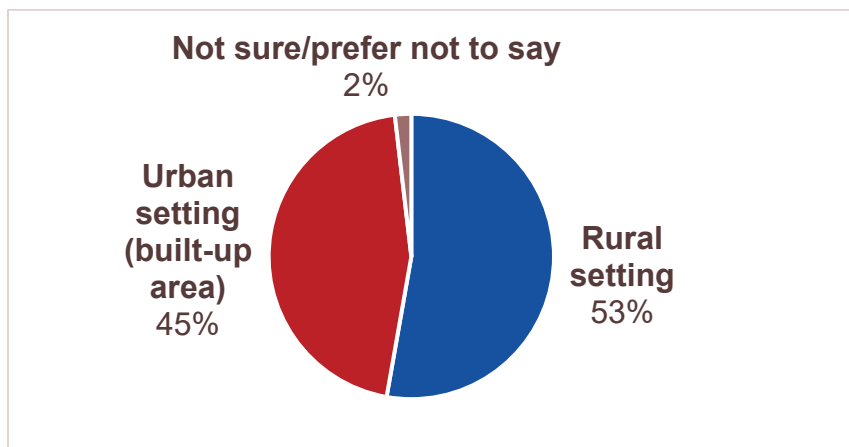
well as some of Lanark Highlands and Drummond/North Elmsley, at 37. Smiths Falls (K7A) was the second-most popular response, followed by similar volumes of responses in Carleton Place (K7C), Perth (K7H), and a large postal code that consists of much of Lanark Highlands, Tay Valley, Drummond/North Elmsley, and significant areas in Leeds & Grenville and Frontenac Counties (K0G). Responses are shown below in Exhibit 3-1.

Exhibit 3-1: Distribution of Respondents by Postal Code



Survey participants were also asked to identify if they live in an urban or rural setting. Exhibit 3-2 illustrates the responses: 53% of respondents lived in a rural area and 45% in an urban area. This is similar to the first phase of engagement, where respondents were close to an even split, but with a higher share of rural respondents rather than urban respondents.

Exhibit 3-2: Distribution of Rural and Urban Respondents

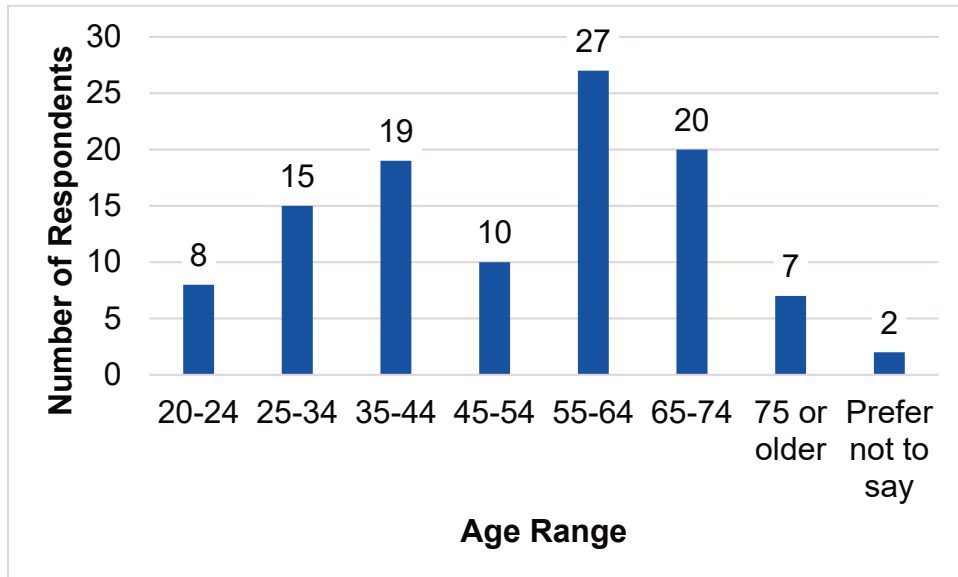


Draft Report: **Engagement**

Rural Transit Feasibility Study for Lanark County and the Town of Smiths Falls

Exhibit 3-3 illustrates the proportion of survey respondents by age cohort. Respondents skew towards an older population, with the most responses from ages 55-64 or 65-74. Some younger age groups, such as 35-44 and 25-34 had more significant response rates than the 45-54 age group, which had a notably low response rate.

Exhibit 3-3: Survey Respondents by Age



Draft Report: **Engagement**

Rural Transit Feasibility Study for Lanark County and the Town of Smiths Falls

Respondents were asked if they supported establishing an on-demand transit service in Lanark County and Smiths Falls. By a significant margin, at 88%, respondents supported the creation of such a system. This could be indicative of widespread public support, but, given the low survey response rate, it could also mean that only those who supported establishing a system took the time to answer survey questions. Responses are depicted in Exhibit 3-4. Respondents were also asked how much Lanark County and Smiths Falls should spend on transit compared to the present day, with most respondents stating either slightly more or much more should be spent. These results are summarized in Exhibit 3-5.

Exhibit 3-4: Survey Respondents by Support for On-Demand Transit

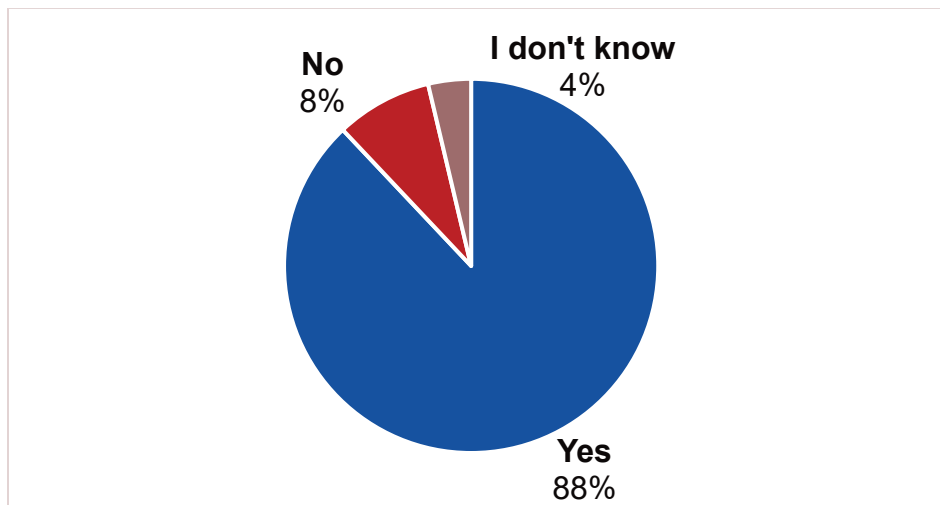
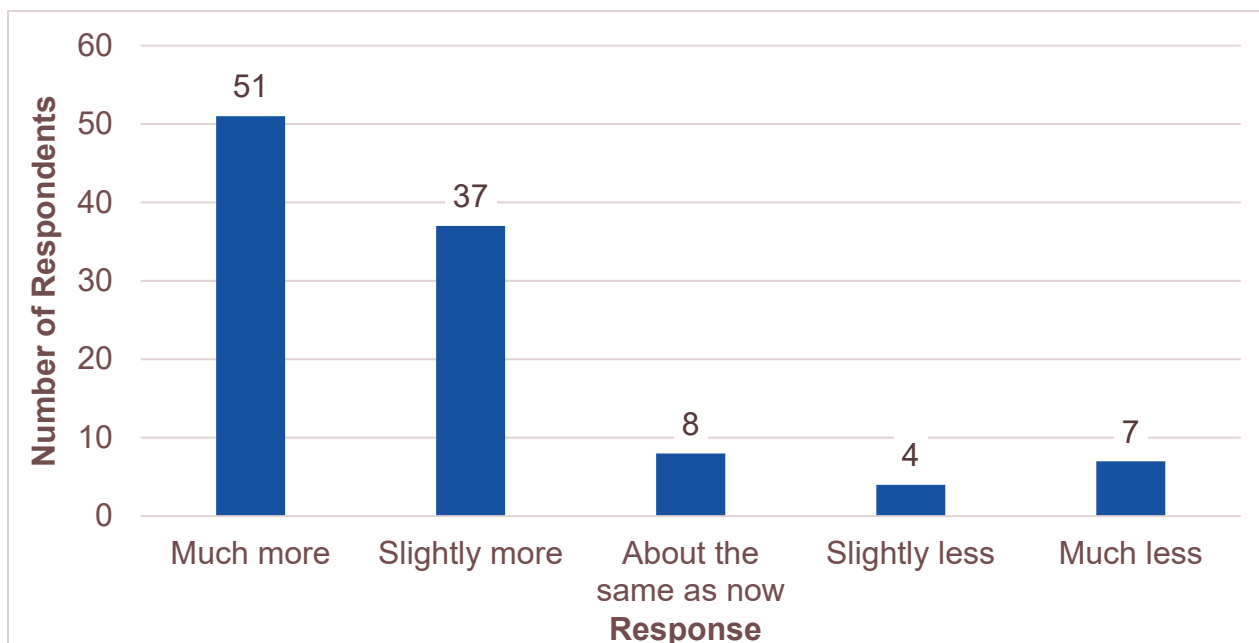


Exhibit 3-5: Survey Respondents by Level of Funding Support

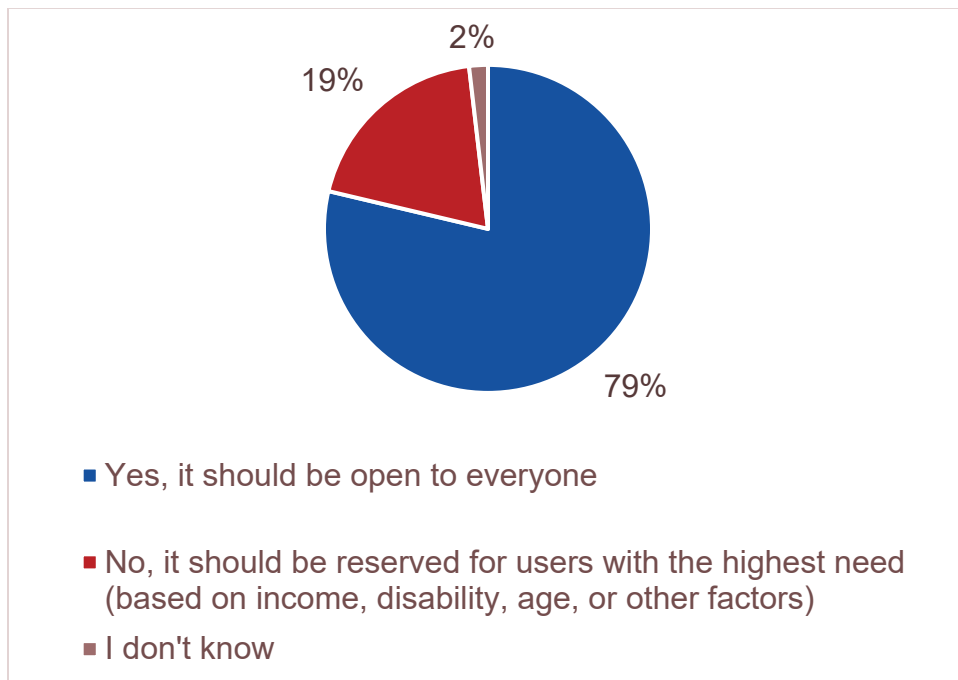


Draft Report: **Engagement**

Rural Transit Feasibility Study for Lanark County and the Town of Smiths Falls

In some jurisdictions, access to public transit is limited to eligible users only. The purpose of doing this is to ensure transportation service is provided for those who need it most when a municipality cannot afford to provide service to everyone. This decision would thus apply to both equity, by providing service to the users with the highest degree of need, and cost, by providing service only to users that qualify rather than the County and Town’s entire population. Respondents were asked if on-demand transit should be open to everyone or reserved for eligible users only, with most (79%) respondents determining it should be open to all interested users. Results are summarized in Exhibit 3-6.

Exhibit 3-6: Survey Respondents' Support for Access to Transit

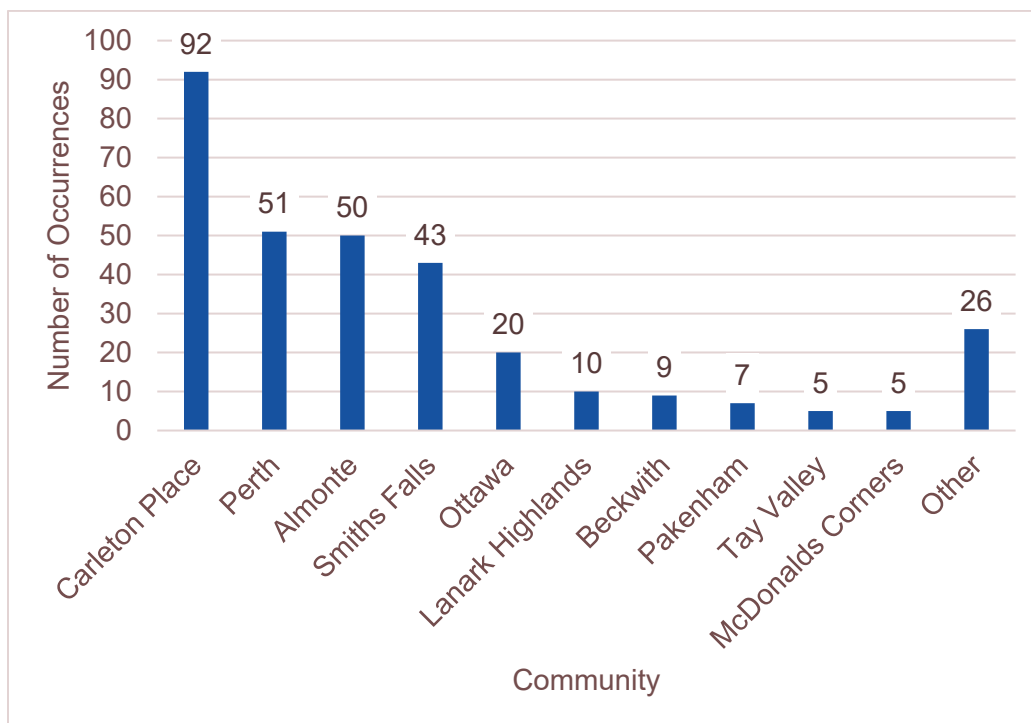


Draft Report: **Engagement**

Rural Transit Feasibility Study for Lanark County and the Town of Smiths Falls

Survey respondents were asked to identify up to three trips they would use on-demand transit to take. While riders could use on-demand transit to travel anywhere within the service area, a demand analysis will help service providers anticipate where they are likely to see the most demand and how vehicles could be arranged strategically in the service area. Responses in this survey were largely proportional to the home postal codes of respondents, with some of the most popular trips including Almonte to Carleton Place, internal travel within Carleton Place, Smiths Falls to Carleton Place, or Perth to Carleton Place. Carleton Place was the most frequently mentioned community, followed by Perth, Almonte, and Smiths Falls. Responses mentioning other communities were broadly dispersed through Lanark County and often revolved around travel to one of the four major settlement areas or to the City of Ottawa. A summary of the most-selected communities in the survey is provided in Exhibit 3-7.

Exhibit 3-7: Survey Respondent Trips by Community



Draft Report: **Engagement**

Rural Transit Feasibility Study for Lanark County and the Town of Smiths Falls

Respondents were asked about when they would use on-demand transit to travel as a way of gauging which hours would be most important for a system to operate. Few transit systems across Ontario, except for the very busiest urban systems, operate 24 hours per day, which makes it all the more important to select the right operating hours for the community. This represents a trade-off between the cost of operating service and the benefit it provides to the community. Respondents' preferences for travel by day of the week and time of day are summarized in Exhibit 3-8 and Exhibit 3-9 below.

Exhibit 3-8: Survey Responses by Day of the Week

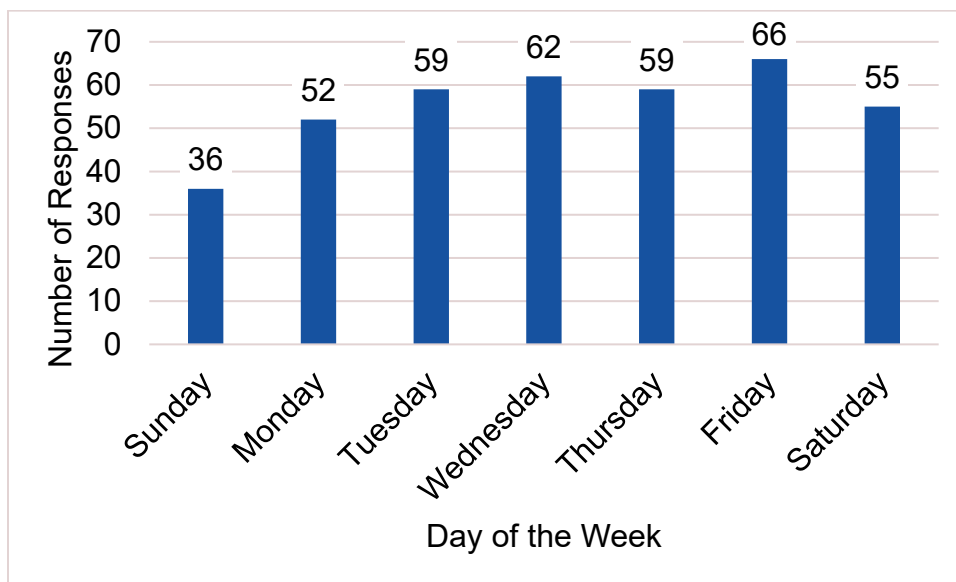
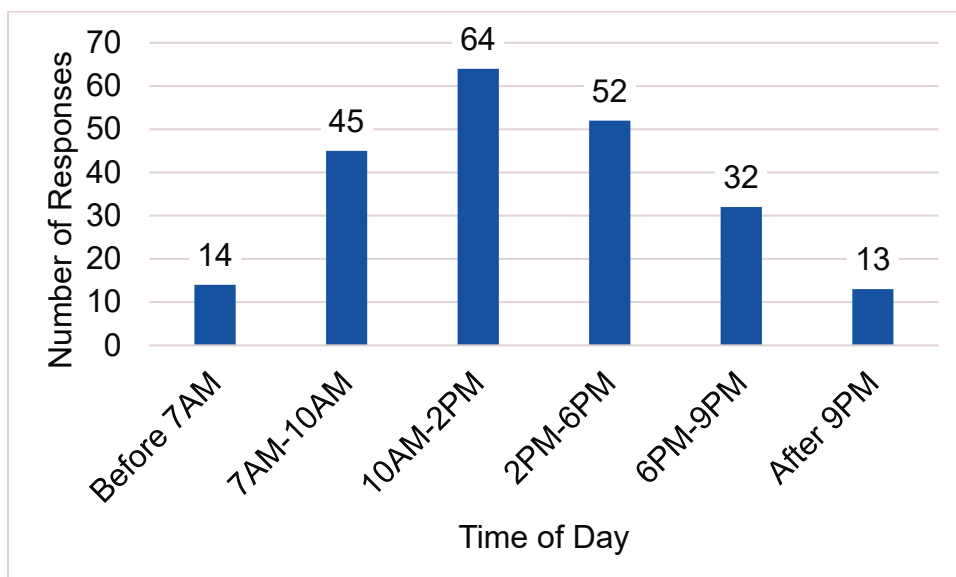


Exhibit 3-9: Survey Responses by Time of Day



Draft Report: **Engagement**

Rural Transit Feasibility Study for Lanark County and the Town of Smiths Falls

Demand for transportation service is mostly dispersed throughout weekdays and Saturdays, with comparatively reduced demand on Sundays. This would suggest that Saturday service is of similar importance to service on many weekdays, as many retail, healthcare, or shift workers work on Saturdays and medical or shopping-related trips may be just as likely to take place on a Saturday as a weekday. Weekday service is unsurprisingly important, while demand is expected to be lowest on Sundays. Some transit systems in smaller communities across Canada do not operate on Sundays for cost reasons, which is possible due to lower levels of travel demand.

Survey responses suggest that operating service in the midday period of 10:00AM to 2:00PM is most important to respondents, followed by mornings from 7:00AM to 10:00AM and afternoons from 2:00PM to 6:00PM. Response ranges in the survey were selected to align with typical service periods for other transportation systems around Ontario, and suggests a pattern of travel demand that is not “peak”-oriented, but rather spread throughout the day, with the highest levels of demand in the middle of the day. This aligns with the times of day that medical and shopping-related trips often take place. The need for evening service among respondents, while still noticeable, was lower than for daytime periods. Many smaller transit systems around Ontario and across Canada do not operate service in the early morning or late evening as that is when travel demand is lowest, something that is reflected in the results of this survey.

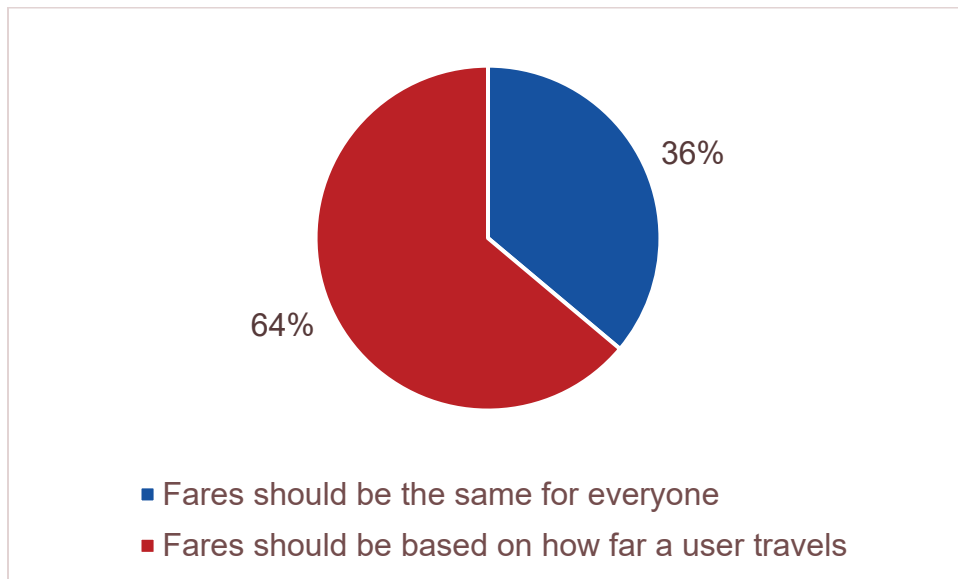
Draft Report: **Engagement**

Rural Transit Feasibility Study for Lanark County and the Town of Smiths Falls

A significant question when planning an on-demand transit system, especially one that operates over a wide area, is how fares are collected. Because a user’s trip is stored when dispatching a vehicle, variable fares can be calculated automatically as it is known how far every user is travelling. Agencies can thus charge fares based on how far a user travels or charge flat fares to all users. There are elements of fairness to both approaches. Distance-based fares charge users relative to the cost of providing their trip, which could encourage users to take shorter trips and reduce operating costs. However, users who live in more remote communities may have a higher level of need, making it difficult to afford to use the service if trips to the nearest major town carry a high cost.

Survey respondents were asked if fares in an on-demand transit system should be the same for all users or based on how far a user travels. By an almost two-thirds margin (64%), respondents preferred distance-based fares. The results are summarized below in Exhibit 3-10.

Exhibit 3-10: Survey Respondents’ Support for Fare Types



Draft Report: **Engagement**

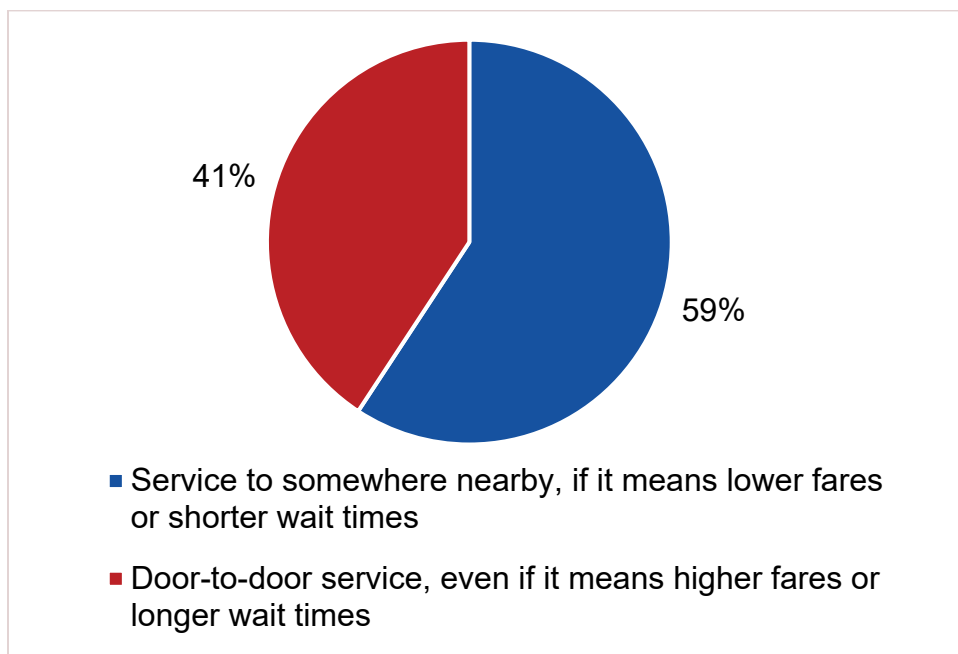
Rural Transit Feasibility Study for Lanark County and the Town of Smiths Falls

Depending on the needs of users and the goals of the system, on-demand transit can be designed as a “door-to-door” or “curb-to-curb” service. There are merits to both designs. A door-to-door service will transport users directly from one destination to another with minimal or no walking required, while a curb-to-curb service operates primarily on public or publicly accessible roads and would transport users to and from the nearest point on a road. A stop-to-stop service would aggregate users’ pick-up and drop-off points in settlement areas to a designated area where riders can get on and off the vehicle.

Door-to-door service minimizes walking access distance for riders but can result in trips taking longer to serve and may not scale up as well as a curb-to-curb or stop-to-stop service. A curb-to-curb or stop-to-stop service may be harder to use for users with limited mobility and may not work as well with longer driveways on rural properties.

Respondents were asked to identify their preference between service to somewhere nearby, if it means lower fares or shorter wait times, and door-to-door service, even if fares were higher or wait times were longer. 41% of respondents chose a door-to-door service regardless of fare or wait time implications, while 59% chose service to somewhere nearby if it could bring fares or wait times down. These results are summarized in Exhibit 3-11. The project team will consider these results in designing an ideal service for Lanark County and Smiths Falls, with the understanding that aggregating stops may not create the same travel time savings in a rural area that it would in an urban or settlement area.

Exhibit 3-11: Survey Responses by Service Type



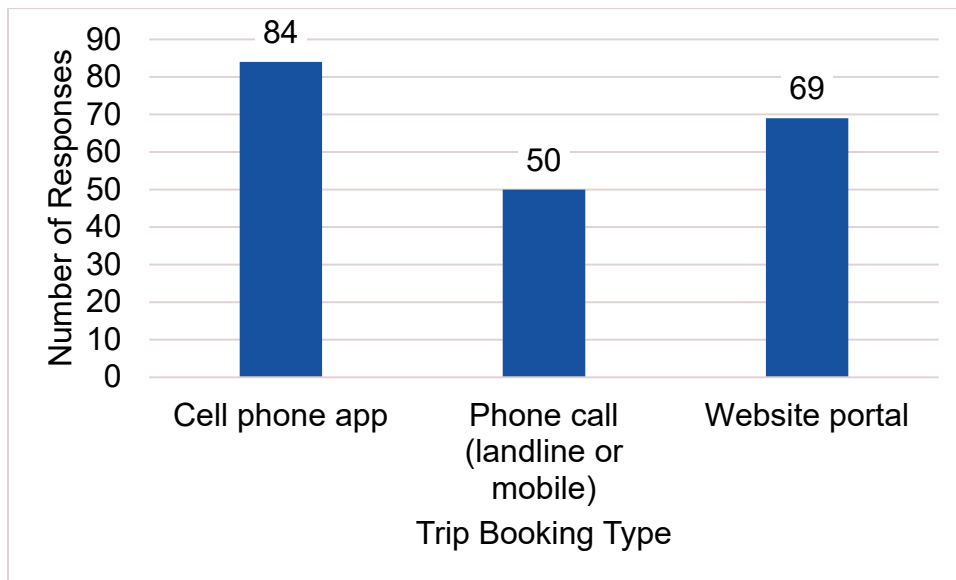
Draft Report: **Engagement**

Rural Transit Feasibility Study for Lanark County and the Town of Smiths Falls

Compared to conventional public transit, which only requires riders to wait at a stop for a vehicle to arrive, on-demand transit requires users to book their trips before they can be picked up. Trips can be booked in several different ways. Most on-demand transit systems are software-driven, using a proprietary mobile app that is developed by the provider of the system’s dispatching software. This same booking platform can also be hosted on a municipal or corporate website, allowing users to book trips using their internet browser. Phone calls can be used to book trips much like a dial-a-ride service, as long as a dispatcher is present to record the request and input the trip into the platform. This is similar to the type of service provided by Lanark Transportation.

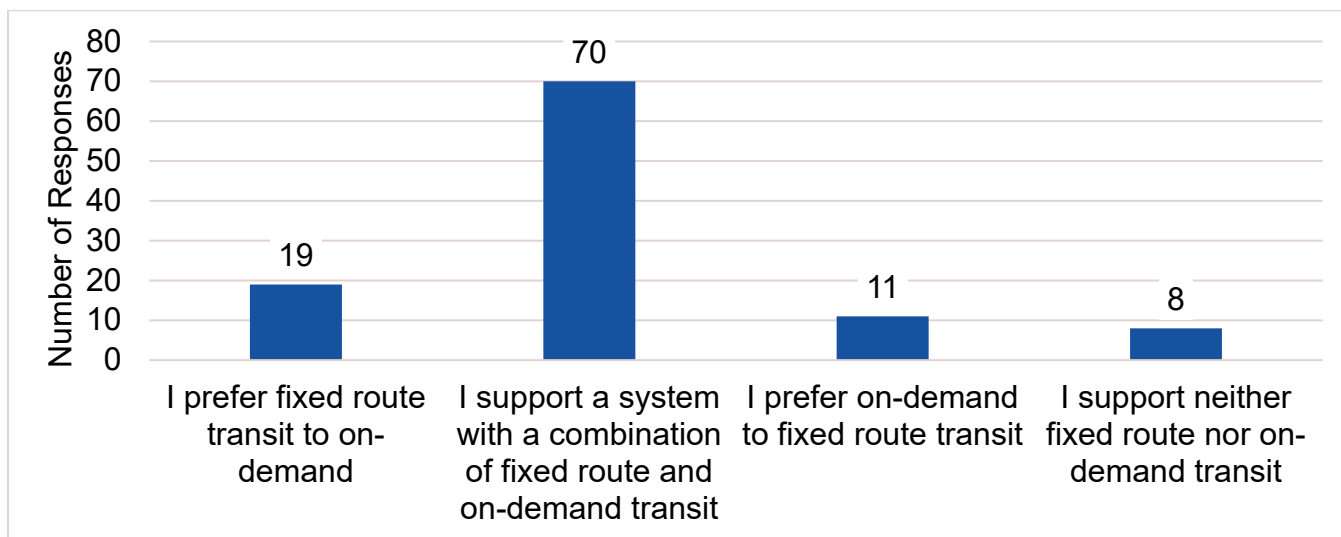
Survey respondents were asked to rate their preference between types of trip booking methods. Results are summarized below in Exhibit 3-12. All three of a cell phone app, phone call, or web portal were selected by at least 50 respondents, with an app being the most common choice and a phone call being the least common choice. These responses underscore the importance of having a variety of ways to book trips, as the booking method that works for one user may not work for another.

Exhibit 3-12: Survey Respondents by Trip Booking Type



A common theme in public and stakeholder engagement across both phases of the study has been the idea that it could represent the start of something more significant in the future. Stakeholders and community members alike have suggested that public transportation in Lanark County and Smiths Falls could start smaller with a service that is affordable in the short term, ultimately growing to a more significant system in the future as demand grows and funding for service operations may be more achievable. Some have suggested that this could include the addition of fixed conventional transit routes on regular schedules, which would represent a similar path as North Grenville, which launched with an on-demand system in 2023 before adding a fixed route to Limebank Station in Ottawa in September 2025. To gauge support for this, respondents were asked: “If Lanark County and Smiths Falls eventually consider fixed transit routes operating on a consistent schedule, what best describes your level of support?” The results of this are summarized below in Exhibit 3-13.

Exhibit 3-13: Survey Responses for Future Transit Expansion



Most survey respondents, at 70, agreed that a combination of fixed routes and on-demand transit would represent a desirable future transportation system for Lanark County and Smiths Falls, while another 19 respondents prefer fixed routes to on-demand. A lower number of respondents, at 11, would prefer a system that is limited to on-demand transit rather than one that also includes fixed routes.

It is also important to note that a significant minority of 8 survey respondents support neither fixed route nor on-demand transit, preferring that public transit in Lanark County and Smiths Falls not exist at all.

3.3 Stakeholder Meeting 2

The second round of stakeholder consultation was hosted as a workshop to elicit input from a broader range of representatives. The in-person event was held on August 13, 2025 at the Lanark County Council Chambers in Perth. Approximately a dozen participants attended the event, including representatives from Lanark Transportation Association as well as others from various social services and economic development services groups.

Due to the reduced attendance compared to the first phase of stakeholder engagement, the format was altered slightly to one single discussion group. Five discussion questions, along with points guiding discussion, were asked to the group and input was collected in a conversational setting, with all panelists providing feedback for discussion.

3.4 Summary of Input Received

A detailed summary of the input expressed by members of the public during in-person conversations, as well as input received by stakeholders as part of Stakeholder Meeting 2, is as follows:

Accessibility

- One resident suggested that transportation services are crucial to the sustainability of the community and aging in place for seniors
- A variety of vehicles may be needed to serve all users, depending on a user's mobility needs and mobility aids, as motorized wheelchairs are quite heavy
- Door-to-door service would be favoured for users with advanced mobility needs, but could also be expensive to operate
- Some community organizations like ConnectWell can't serve everyone unless staff go directly to people's homes, leaving dozens of people across the County that can't be served due to resourcing limits
- The ability to book trips in other languages was noted as a benefit to users who may have recently arrived in Canada and might not be comfortable in English yet
- Regarding who should have access to the service and how much data should be collected, stakeholders agreed that adding too much complexity can be a barrier to users and that booking trips should be simple
- Residents stated that vehicles should accommodate every potential user, with consideration for any and all mobility aids users might require

Draft Report: **Engagement**

Rural Transit Feasibility Study for Lanark County and the Town of Smiths Falls

- When booking trips, residents suggested the booking platform should collect relevant information about a user's wheelchair such as size, weight, and motorization
- Residents suggested booking platforms should allow users to book trips with either Lanark Transportation or a public transit service, with integration between the two providers and a direct connection to agencies that provide funding, such as ODSP
- Residents expressed that attitude and training were crucial aspects for future drivers when assisting passengers in wheelchairs

Cost to Municipalities

- Community leaders are concerned about the cost of providing a transportation service, and one suggested that service could begin with a smaller service area in built-up settlement areas before expanding to other areas of the County
- Stakeholders agreed on the benefits of transit but noted the challenge of cost, stating that the only downside is whether the County can afford it or not
- Support is limited for increasing taxes, while provincial Gas Tax funding can't cover the entire cost of system operation and fare revenue is likely to be limited, as it is for other rural systems around Ontario
- Stakeholders suggested that the service should be creative with how it generates revenue, potentially booking out vehicles to serve major events that support tourism
- Budgetary concerns were mentioned as a consistent challenge for service providers like Lanark Transportation, and it was noted that just an \$80,000 increase in the Town of Perth's annual operating budget would represent a 1% tax increase
- Public survey respondents who opposed the introduction of public transit services often cited taxation as the main reason for their opposition

Cost to Users

- Stakeholders suggested ways to reduce the cost to individual users including bulk ticket purchasing by social agencies for their clients, free transfers within a certain time frame, a reduced cost for return trips within a certain time frame, or capping fares beyond a certain distance or number of trips per month
- A wide divergence of incomes was reported in rural areas, with many residents having either very high or very low income
- A community member cited an example of subsidized taxi fares in Iqaluit where residents pay a flat fare, which is similar to how NG Transit in North Grenville operates

Draft Report: **Engagement**

Rural Transit Feasibility Study for Lanark County and the Town of Smiths Falls

- Fare capping or a monthly pass was supported by some residents to reduce the cost of using the service for frequent riders

Economic and Employment-Based Benefits

- County and Town residents who don't have reliable transportation may be impacted in searching for jobs
- Stakeholders noted that chambers of commerce have observed that improved transportation could help businesses to attract workers and that improved transportation could have economic as well as social benefits
- From a healthcare perspective, nurses and other healthcare workers recruited from outside of Canada may not have valid driver's licenses and could struggle to travel between multiple hospital campuses
- Transit was suggested as a way to improve outcomes for job seekers, enabling people to cast a wider net
- A connection to Ottawa was supported by some residents to accommodate job seekers and postsecondary students

Other Considerations

- Communication was noted as a critical piece to educate new users and promote the service if one is pursued
- Hospitals in Perth and Smiths Falls are linked to one another, leading to many healthcare-based trips between the two communities
- If on-demand transit is successful, some stakeholders suggested "growing into" fixed routes in the future as North Grenville has done
- The Rural Transportation Working Group, which authored a report on the subject of transit in 2016, noted that the needs identified in that report have not changed since then
- Different demographics have different transportation needs at different times of day, as shift workers can work at irregular times and healthcare appointments can be scheduled at a variety of times of day
- Stakeholders agreed that the focus in the first phase for an on-demand transit system should be moving people around Lanark County and Smiths Falls
- Climate sustainability was a key concern for residents, with support for low or zero-emission vehicles

Arcadis Professional Services (Canada) Inc.
55 St. Clair Avenue West, 7th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M4V 2Y7
Canada
Phone: 416 596 1930
Fax:
www.arcadis.com