

TRANSIT RIDERSHIP HITS RECORD HIGH, BUT IT COSTS TAXPAYERS MORE

BAMBANG SADEWO
bsadewo@metroland.com

Milton Transit announced that the annual transit ridership number reached an all-time high last year.

In a release, they state that there were 598,055 passenger boardings in 2018, up 11 per cent from the previous year.

Ridership in the fourth quarter went up by 12 per cent compared to the same time period last year - with a service utilization performance of 13 boardings per service hour. They also recorded an uptick of six per cent in trip demand on the Milton access+ specialized system in the fourth quarter compared to the same time a year earlier.

Tony D'Alessandro, the town's transit manager, said the overall growth "continues to be influenced

by residential growth, service enhancement and service reliability improvements made this past year."

He added: "In September 2018, a number of initiatives were implemented such as new services into Boyne (10 Farmstead route) and changes to the 1A Industrial route to accommodate a later shift time for employees working in the 401 Industrial Park area."

Coun. Rick Malboeuf said the ridership increase is par for the course.

"Considering the number of increased service hours ... we've added new routes, more buses on the road ... our population has grown," Malboeuf told the Milton Champion. "So it's just natural that the total ridership would increase - as they should every year."

His concern is on the impact it has on taxpayers.



Graham Paine/Metroland

Milton Transit has received funding from the Ontario Gas Tax Program.

"In 2017, the tax-funded subsidy per ride was \$5.79. In 2018, that increased to \$6.16. So, that's going in the wrong direction," he said. Additionally, the town

and regional councillor - who sits on the transit committee - shares his concern on the upcoming provincial governance review.

"We don't know where

transit is going to be three or six months from now. Is it going to be a GTAA transit system? Is it going to be a regional transit system? There's that uncertainty

that won't be resolved till mid summer or early fall," he said.

Meanwhile, responding to online feedback from transit users about the lack of Presto integration and real-time bus-tracking system, Malboeuf said they should be addressed in the Milton Transit Master Plan.

"We will be receiving the first draft of our five-year master plan," he said of a scheduled meeting on Thursday.

"I've had a quick look at some of it and it looks promising from my point of view. So I'm going to wait till I get that report - and then that'll be coming before council."

Among other things, the report is expected to shed more light on the total impact of transit ridership increase on taxpayers, he said.



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Helen Vatis
hvatis@haltonhealthcare.com
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