

### REPORT FROM THE SPECIAL PROJECTS MANAGER

Re: Transit Study Final Reporting

### RECOMMENDATION

That the report from the Special Project Manager be received by Council;

### BACKGROUND

A request for proposals for the review & improvement of Elliot Lake's conventional & specialized transit systems titled TRAN2022-01 was issued on Jul 13, 2022 and closed on August 30, 2022. On July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Council awarded the contract to perform the study to EXP Services Inc. Staff and EXP had the kick-off meeting for the Study project on October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023 and the consultancy firm began its analysis.

Work between the firm and Staff continued through the Winter of 2024 on survey design and stakeholder engagement. The public engagement portion of the Study ran from April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2024 to May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024 and resulted in 359 survey respondents.

While public engagement for feedback was a very important part of the Study process, the scope of work for the Transit Study was much greater and included the provision of detailed route review inclusive of accessibility, timing and stop locations for the redesign and implementation of an improved route to meet the needs of the ridership. Also included was a marketing plan for the new system as well as capital planning to meet required service levels.

EXP conducted a preliminary presentation of results of the Study at the August 27, 2024 Public Services Standing Committee Meeting, and used feedback from that meeting to continue their analysis through the fall of 2024.

Local constituents in varying stages of life rely heavily upon the Elliot Lake transit system. The ultimate goal of the review is to improve access to transit as well as the quality of routes and associated infrastructure in a sustainable manner.

As a resource to councillors and the community, both Rick Zarzosa and Mahima Sharma of EXP Services Inc. will be presenting an overview of the results of the Study to the Public Services Committee meeting on January 22, 2025.

### ANALYSIS

As capital asset renewal of City infrastructure is expected to continue to place pressure on the City's finances and reserves, Staff expects that meeting service levels for existing services will become increasingly challenging. In this situation, it is very important that the City proceed in a manner that seeks to maintain and improve services through creative and effective solutions while simultaneously seeking to focus on sustainability and cost effectiveness.

It is studies such as this one that arm Staff with the required information from specialized experts to make informed recommendations to Council that can be used to make good decisions for the benefit of the community.

This Study's final reporting document contains:

- an evaluation of the current transit system, including both conventional and specialized services;
- an assessment of the specific transportation needs of the community arrived at through the engagement of local stakeholders;
- identified opportunities for accessibility improvement;
- an analysis of routes and stops, including proposed modifications to increase efficiency and better meet needs;
- a discussion and analysis of alternative service delivery models including an investigation of the possibility of on-demand microtransit;
- and a capital plan designed to meet the required service levels;

Staff's appraisal of the document after review is that it is very comprehensive and that it provides concise analysis and actionable advice. Staff can use this information to provide recommendations to Council to consider that would allow for improvement of the accessibility, service levels and efficiency of the system in the near, medium and long term.

It is Staff's opinion that this information places the community in a good position to make strategic changes to the system by leveraging the report to both access and make effective use of funding from upper level government programs.

Moving forward, Staff plans to incorporate the recommendations into the report into its operational and capital budgeting, logistics planning and in its efforts to secure and utilize grant funding.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

There is no direct financial impact that arises as the result of this reporting, as the City now has to decide what actions it seeks to take based on the presented advice. These decisions will be made through the implementation planning process and future budgeting processes.

Thankfully, the study has been very clear about immediate opportunities for improvement to the system, and Staff is investigating the logistics and expense associated with these activities with the intent to incorporate them into the budget process that is currently underway.

## **LINKS TO STRATEGIC PLAN**

This project directly relates to the following key section of the strategic plan:

12. The City will review the future direction of the transit system in Elliot Lake ensuring that the needs of the community are considered. The review will consider the user friendliness of the system, competitive fare rates and a balanced overall cost to the municipality.

## **SUMMARY**

Staff recommends that Council receive the completed Transit Study report.