

THE Route Ahead

Service Strategy 2022 – 2025



DurhamRegion
Transit

School

Work

Shopping

Recreation

920

Contents

Vision, Mission, Principles and Values	4
Foreword	6
Pillars	8
Supporting Regional Plans	9
Customer Markets	10
Post-secondary	11
Toronto Central Business District	12
Trips within Durham Region	13
The Route Ahead: 2022 to 2025	14
Current customers	15
Developing new travel markets	16
Social equity: supporting greater access to mobility	17
Service design elements	17
A comprehensive transit network	18
Infrastructure	21
Appendices	24
Appendix 1: Network Map 2025	24
Appendix 2: Network Map 2025 (Rural Areas)	26

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, Durham Region Transit's clarity of purpose has remained steadfast. Our goals for the next three years have evolved to adapt to the changing needs of our customers—our vision, mission, principles and core values continue to frame our route ahead to recovery.



Vision

The public chooses DRT service because it is convenient and meets their mobility needs.

Mission

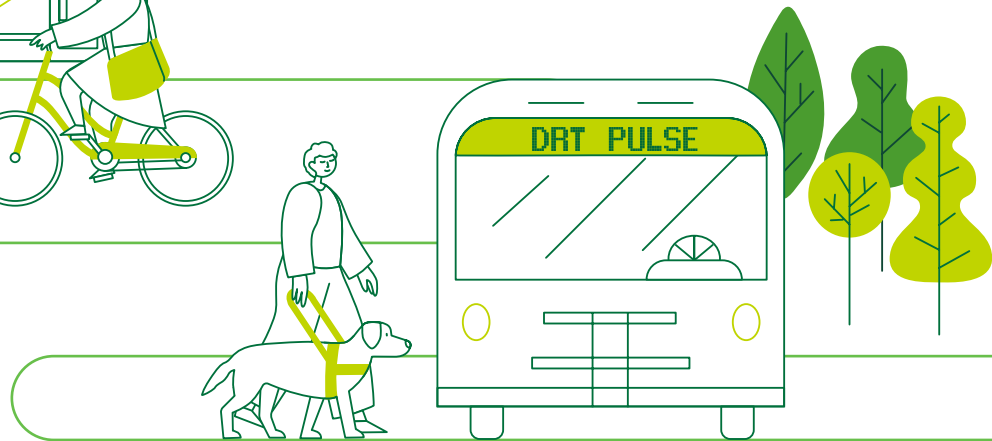
To deliver efficient and effective mobility solutions across the Region of Durham in the most sustainable way possible.





Principles

- Every customer trip counts.
- We provide value to customers, our stakeholders, and our community.
- We mitigate the environmental impact of our operations.
- We provide customer-centric integrated services that enable independent, spontaneous and worry-free travel.
- We are accountable for decisions and transparent in sharing successes and failures.



Values

Committed to serving our local communities, DRT shares the core values outlined by the Region:

Leadership

We demonstrate integrity and vision, providing the organization with good governance and management.

Effectiveness

We anticipate the changing needs of the community and provide services within a framework of financial stability and transparency.

Innovation

We support life-long learning and commitment to ongoing research, knowledge exchange, and continuous quality improvement.

Inclusion

We provide an accessible, inclusive environment that values the diversity of our staff and the community.

Environmental Responsibility

We prioritize community leadership and environmental sustainability in our operations.

Service Excellence

We encourage professional excellence through collaboration, partnerships and teamwork in a culture that fosters trust and respect.





Foreword

Following record-setting ridership in 2019 and the first two months of 2020, pandemic-related measures started to impact ridership starting March 16, 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a new reality for transit services across the province, as most residents stayed home from work and school.

Although ridership fell by about 73 per cent, there were still thousands of people who continued to rely on our services.

Essential workers were on the job; working to sustain our communities. Plus, residents relied on us to travel to medical appointments and various retail locations, such as grocery stores.

The demand for public transit is expected to recover to pre-pandemic levels slowly and gradually. Based on available data, DRT estimates ridership to recover considerably by 2025 (Figure 1).

While five-year service plans are the norm, The Route Ahead will guide transit service planning for the next three years. As DRT looks to rebuild and regain ridership during the pandemic recovery period, adapt service to new and changing behaviour, and build the foundation for future growth.

By 2026, DRT will begin to realize positive outcomes from recent strategic transportation investments made by the Region; completion of the GO train extension to Bowmanville, a new zero-emission bus garage in north Oshawa to support the transition to a zero-emission fleet, new sections of the centre-lane Durham-Scarborough Bus Rapid Transit (DSBRT) coming online, and the first year of the post pandemic five-year service plan.

Ridership fell by 73% during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Revenue hours and boardings

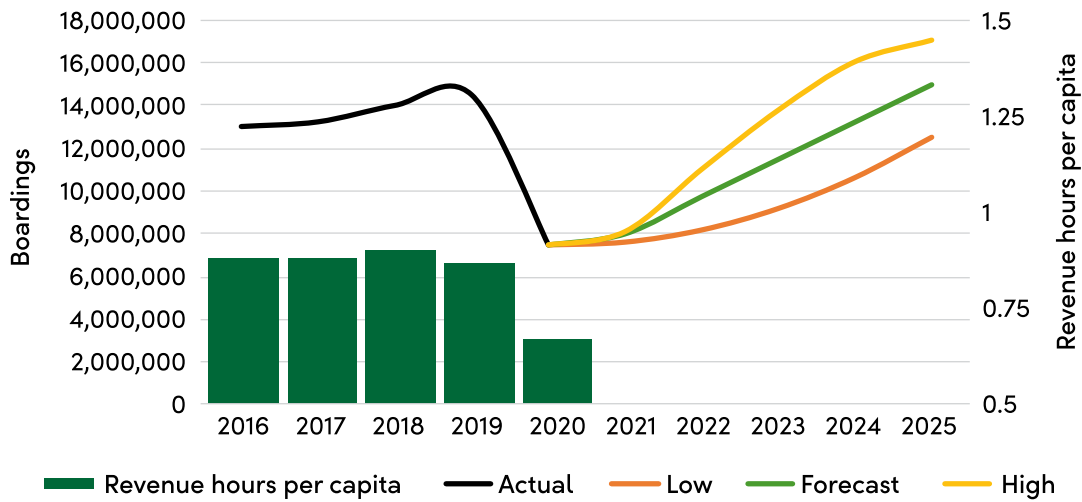


Figure 1: DRT Revenue hours per capita and boardings by year

Compared to transit systems in Ontario with comparable populations, the level of transit service delivered in Durham Region has historically been below-average (see Figure 2). As population and employment grow in Durham over the coming years it is important to enhance investment in transit to offer additional travel options for residents, deliver a competitive mobility service, and ultimately attract new customers.

The Route Ahead positions transit as a viable alternative to single-occupant automobiles and a reliable means of travel for people who do not have a car or cannot drive.

Revenue hours per capita

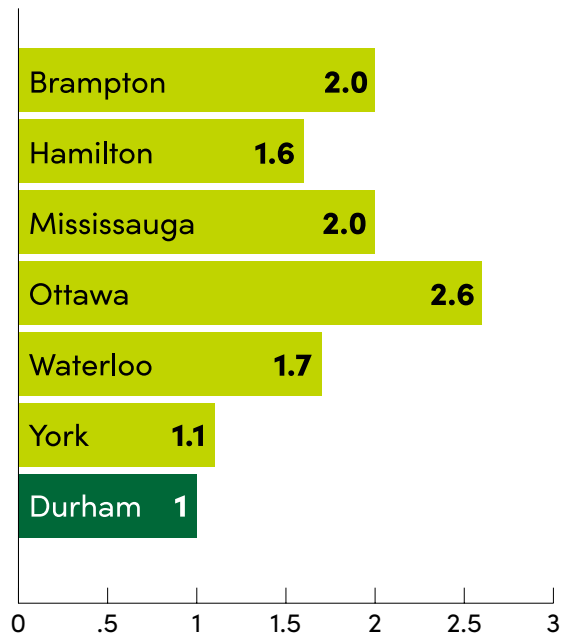


Figure 2: 2019 Revenue hours per capita comparison among Ontario peer transit systems (Canadian Urban Transit Association)

Pillars

The foundation of the Route Ahead service strategy is supported by five pillars: availability, innovation, reliability, safety and growth.

1

Availability

Customers can access transit when they need to travel. Service is available in all areas of Durham Region, using a mix of scheduled service and Demand Response service delivery models. Service is flexible; and reflects the purpose and volume of travel in urban and rural areas of Durham Region.

DRT endeavours to reduce the average customer wait times for transit in urban and rural areas, 24 hours a day. Scheduled service frequencies on major corridors will be attractive for those with multiple travel options and Demand Response services will be adapted to keep wait times low.

2

Innovation

The ability to meet customers' evolving needs and trip patterns will require a combination of existing and new strategies.

DRT will continuously adapt its flexible service delivery models to new customer needs and travel patterns. Leveraging technological solutions will be critical for success, as will be increasing access of these solutions for all customers.

3

Reliability

The service will be flexible to meet and adjust to new travel patterns as customers return to work, school, shopping, and recreational activities.

Transit priority measures will improve reliability by decreasing travel time.

4

Safety

Safety is central to each customer's journey, be it in a vehicle or at bus stops and terminals.

DRT will improve the customer environment on-board vehicles, at stops, and in stations by leveraging best practices and new solutions.

5

Growth

The Region of Durham will continue to see growth in residential and employment opportunities, for which new residents and employers will expect transit to be a competitive mobility option.

DRT will endeavour to provide transit-first solutions to new communities so that residents can rely on public transit from day one, and to support the Region's economic development by supporting employment and recreational access.

Supporting regional plans

DRT will continue to support initiatives for a more compact, transit friendly Region, including:

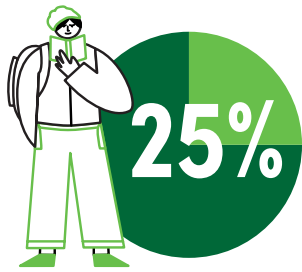
- Durham Region's Strategic Plan
- Envision Durham
- Transportation Master Plan
- Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan
- Greater Golden Horseshoe Transportation Plan

Customer Markets

DRT's ridership includes several customer markets, which have been impacted in different ways by COVID-19.



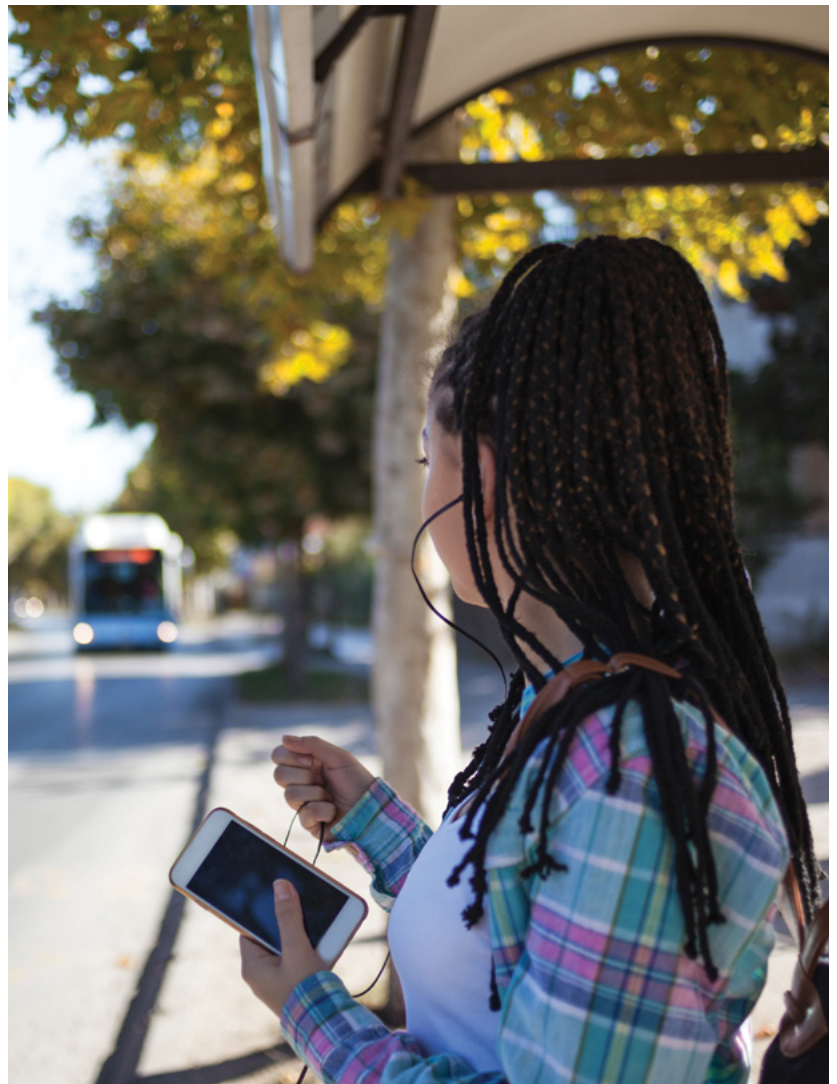
Trips within Durham Region and Toronto



Post-secondary

The post-secondary travel market makes up 25 per cent of transit trips and is primarily comprised of U-Pass customers travelling to Durham College, Ontario Tech University and Trent University. Post-secondary ridership is expected to re-establish itself quickly, as provincial guidance provides for a return to in-class learning in fall 2021.

Limited campus parking before the COVID-19 pandemic encouraged students to use public transit. Not all students returned to in-class learning in fall 2021. As more students begin returning to the classroom, parking will become more congested and transit will again become a more attractive travel option for staff and students.



New service, operating as Route 920, began operating in September 2021—providing service to both the Centennial College Progress Campus in Toronto and the Durham College/Ontario Tech University campus in north Oshawa. This new service was introduced to address challenges currently experienced by some customers travelling between Toronto and Durham Region by reducing fare and service integration barriers.

A new bus route began operating in September 2021, providing service to both the Centennial College Progress Campus in Toronto and the Durham College/Ontario Tech University campus in north Oshawa.



70% of Durham residents who commute to downtown Toronto rely on transit.

Toronto Central Business District

Commuters travelling to downtown Toronto's Central Business District make up 25 per cent of transit trips and are not expected to return to DRT in large numbers in the short-term.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, DRT played an important role in linking local neighbourhoods to GO Transit train stations. Downtown commuters have historically relied on transit, with over 70 per cent of Durham residents who commute to downtown Toronto doing so by transit, mostly on GO train services.

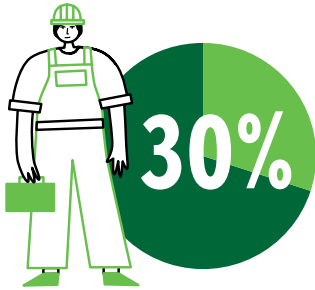
GO Transit customers formed a significant ridership—based on many local DRT routes that operated between area GO stations and local neighbourhoods. These routes generally operated along local roads, in areas

beyond walking distance of services operating along main corridors. GO Transit customers represented over 50 per cent of customers on these local routes. During the height of the pandemic these routes saw ridership decline to the point that many trips were carrying only one or two customers.

This market is expected to remain depressed over this service strategy period due to the following factors:

- Employers are expected to move towards a mix of work from home and in-office work, resulting in employees commuting downtown only a few days a week.
- With less employees commuting every day to work, parking constraints at GO stations are expected to ease, making park-and-ride more attractive to some customers who previously relied on DRT services.

Trips within Durham Region



Work

DRT provides travel to many employment locations throughout Durham Region, representing approximately 30 per cent of transit trips.

While this market was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the effects were less significant than other markets. This is expected to rebound faster than other markets.

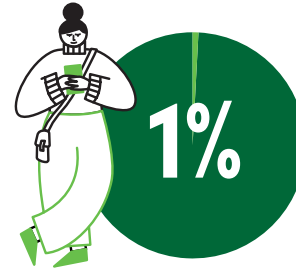
New industrial employment growth—such as Amazon distribution and fulfilment centres which opened in September 2021—will contribute to market growth.



Shopping, leisure and recreation

This customer market represents 20 per cent of transit trips and is expected to rebound faster than others. Many customers use transit to access essential services such as food, shopping or medical appointments.

To make it easier for customers to access recreational opportunities, DRT enhanced services to recreational areas in summer 2021, helping to further rebuild this market and attract additional ridership.



High school students

Accounting for approximately one per cent of transit trips, high school-related travel ceased during large portions of the 2020–2021 school year. DRT initiated a review to better understand the impacts of various student travel scenarios on the DRT network. DRT identified opportunities within existing resources to increase the share of students using DRT for school-related travel to 42 per cent from nine per cent, including adjustments to the Y10 youth 10-month loyalty fare incentive program.

Work, shopping, leisure and recreation travel in Durham Region is expected to rebound faster than other markets.

The Route Ahead: 2022 to 2025

While post-pandemic ridership markets remain uncertain, it is expected that ridership will return to 2019 levels by 2025. By 2025, structural changes in travel patterns will be solidified, and growth in travel will have replaced any ridership lost by existing customers travelling less.

To support ridership recovery and growth to 2025, DRT will:

- Be innovative in service offerings, enhance the customer experience and seek new ridership markets.
- Work with regional partners to ensure that customers have a seamless and convenient experience using transit.
- Adapt to changes in the travel markets as they occur.



Current customers

Essential trips

Representing approximately 35 per cent of pre-pandemic ridership, many current customers used DRT throughout the height of the pandemic. For many of these residents, DRT remains their sole method of travel to work, appointments and essential shopping.

It is important for DRT to ensure that it offers services that allow all residents, regardless of where they live or their access to an automobile or ability to drive, to fully participate in society.

To support all residents and provide access to transit, DRT will:

- ➔ Enhance frequency and access to transit services across Durham, ensuring DRT services are available to support residents' travel needs and the economic recovery of the Region.
- ➔ Expand service to recreational opportunities throughout the Region and in neighbouring Toronto.
- ➔ Leverage the Social Equity Guidelines to ensure all residents have equitable access to transit services.



Discretionary trips

Discretionary trips—made by customers with other travel options, such as driving or carpooling—represented approximately 65 per cent of transit trips prior to the pandemic. Whether avoiding parking constraints, traffic, or just wanting to relax during their commute, DRT will need to demonstrate value to regain these customers.

DRT will demonstrate value to customers by:

- ➔ Providing more frequent services that make transit an easy travel alternative to the automobile.
- ➔ Maintaining competitive fare options.
- ➔ Working with our regional partners, such as Metrolinx, on campaigns reinforcing the value of transit services.
- ➔ Enhancing the transit network to take customers where they are going in a fast and efficient manner.
- ➔ Offering flexibility in travel with different service models.

35% of transit riders, use DRT to travel to work, appointments and essential shopping.



Most Durham Region residents who work in downtown Toronto use public transit.



Developing new travel markets

To position DRT for sustained ridership growth, the following markets were identified as areas where DRT can attract new customers.

Recreational travel

As demand grows in recreational areas, and parking constraints increase at popular locations, DRT will enhance services to key destinations and position DRT as a viable option for recreational travel.

DRT will enhance access to recreational opportunities within Durham, and to regional attractions, by:

- Exploring recreational markets, including access to the Pickering and Whitby waterfronts.
- Working with regional and municipal partners to provide connections between transit services and trail and cycling facilities, such as the Waterfront Trail and the proposed Durham Meadoway.

Employment centres

Most employees travelling from Durham Region to jobs in downtown Toronto use public transit. However, the automobile dominates travel to employment centres in Durham Region, Toronto (outside the downtown core) and in York Region.

DRT can enhance transit options for travel to non-downtown Toronto areas by ensuring service is attractive, fast and meets the needs of employees in these areas. DRT will:

- Partner with business groups and business improvement associations to promote DRT services.
- Continue to support progress of the Durham Scarborough Bus Rapid Transit corridor to the Scarborough City Centre.
- Review service delivery models between Durham Region and York Region.

Overnight travel

Whether travelling to an overnight or early morning work shift, or to and from late night leisure activities and entertainment, residents require mobility at all times of the day and night. DRT will:

- Expand and monitor 24-hour transit service across the network and make the appropriate adjustments to ensure efficient and effective service for residents.

Travel within Durham

Travel within Durham Region represents the largest travel market. The 2017 Durham Transportation Master Plan found that during the morning peak period, over 50 per cent of work trips remained within Durham Region.

While the number of transit trips was growing prior to the pandemic, the proportion of trips carried by transit for internal trips within Durham Region has remained stable.

Because local journeys within Durham are shorter and do not require the additional fare associated with connecting to other transit agencies, local travel is generally more conducive to transit use.

The transit system needs to support people to travel anywhere-to-anywhere. DRT has made significant changes and investments to provide frequent and available service, and these improvements will encourage customers to make local trips using transit within Durham Region and their local communities. Future actions will include:

- Reviewing how different service offerings, such as Demand Response, can better connect people to where they are travelling locally.
- Marketing the more frequent and available service, to build awareness of how easy transit service is for making local trips.

Social equity: supporting greater access to mobility

To ensure all residents have access to mobility, DRT has created social equity guidelines that apply a social equity lens to service planning decisions.

Service design elements

To create a resilient transit network, several factors are required. These factors are often outside the direct control of DRT, and DRT will collaborate with municipal and regional partners to advance transit supportive development.

Density

The Ontario Transit Supportive Guidelines recommends that 22 units per hectare, or 50 residents and jobs per hectare, as the minimum density at which a basic 20- to 30-minute bus service can be supported. While this is only a recommendation—and there are examples of lower densities supporting high service levels—in general, higher density results in more potential customers for a transit route.

DRT will endeavour to collaborate with local and regional groups to support and promote Transit Orientated Development and transit friendly communities across the Region, including the major transit station areas.



DRT will continue to support and promote transit-oriented development and transit-friendly communities.

Destinations and mixed uses

A mix of uses and a variety of destinations along a transit corridor produces the best results for high ridership on a route. For example, PULSE 901 Simcoe serves several major destinations including downtown Oshawa, the Lakeridge Health medical area, the Durham College/Ontario Tech University north campus, and various higher density residential and commercial areas in between. This mixture of uses and destinations makes PULSE 901 one of the highest-performing routes in the system, and supports a high level of service.

DRT supports mixed-use development and destination building around current and future GO station hubs.

DRT is working with Metrolinx on the design of the new Oshawa to Bowmanville GO Transit rail extension, as well as the integration of DRT transit services.

Today, GO stations within Durham Region are transfer points between DRT and GO Transit services. Surrounded by parking lots, these stations have few uses within walking distance that make them destinations to support transit ridership.

DRT will work with our partners at Durham Region and at local municipalities and Metrolinx, to advance important work in transforming GO stations into hubs and destinations by:

- ➔ Supporting the Rapid Transit and Transit Oriented Development Office to ensure DRT services can support high density, mixed use areas around new train stations.
- ➔ Working with area municipalities on intensification plans around GO stations.

Direct, easy to understand routing

In order to remain competitive and compete for travel time with an automobile, DRT considers routes that are direct as possible. By reducing routes that meander through local neighbourhoods DRT aims to ensure the fastest travel time.

DRT will maximize direct routes where possible and appropriate.

A comprehensive transit network

The transit network in Durham Region comprises various transit services that operate as one comprehensive transit network.

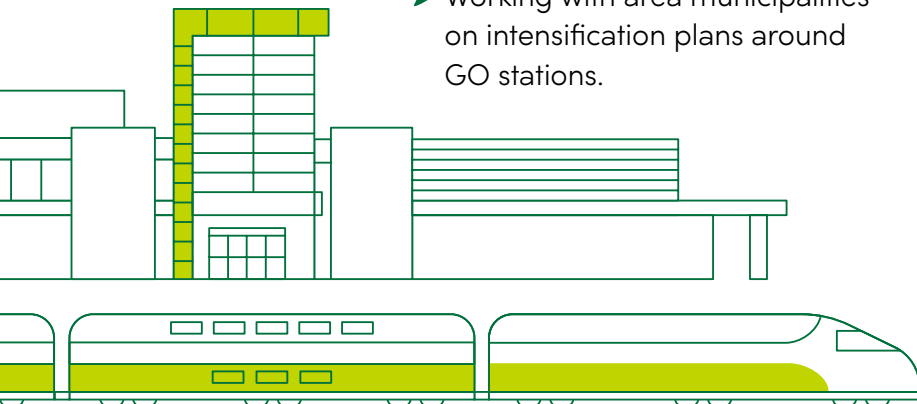
Rapid Transit GO Transit rail

The GO Lakeshore East rail service provides rapid transit service within and between Durham Region and Toronto. Many DRT services feed into the GO rail line, and Metrolinx is planning for the extension of service from Oshawa to Bowmanville.

DRT is working in collaboration with Metrolinx and our Rapid Transit Office on the design of the Lakeshore East rail service, and integration of DRT services with the extension.

PULSE rapid bus service

DRT's PULSE routes provide rapid bus service throughout the Region. To improve reliability, PULSE corridors typically feature dedicated lanes or priority transit measures, such as HOV lanes, queue jump lanes or signal priority.



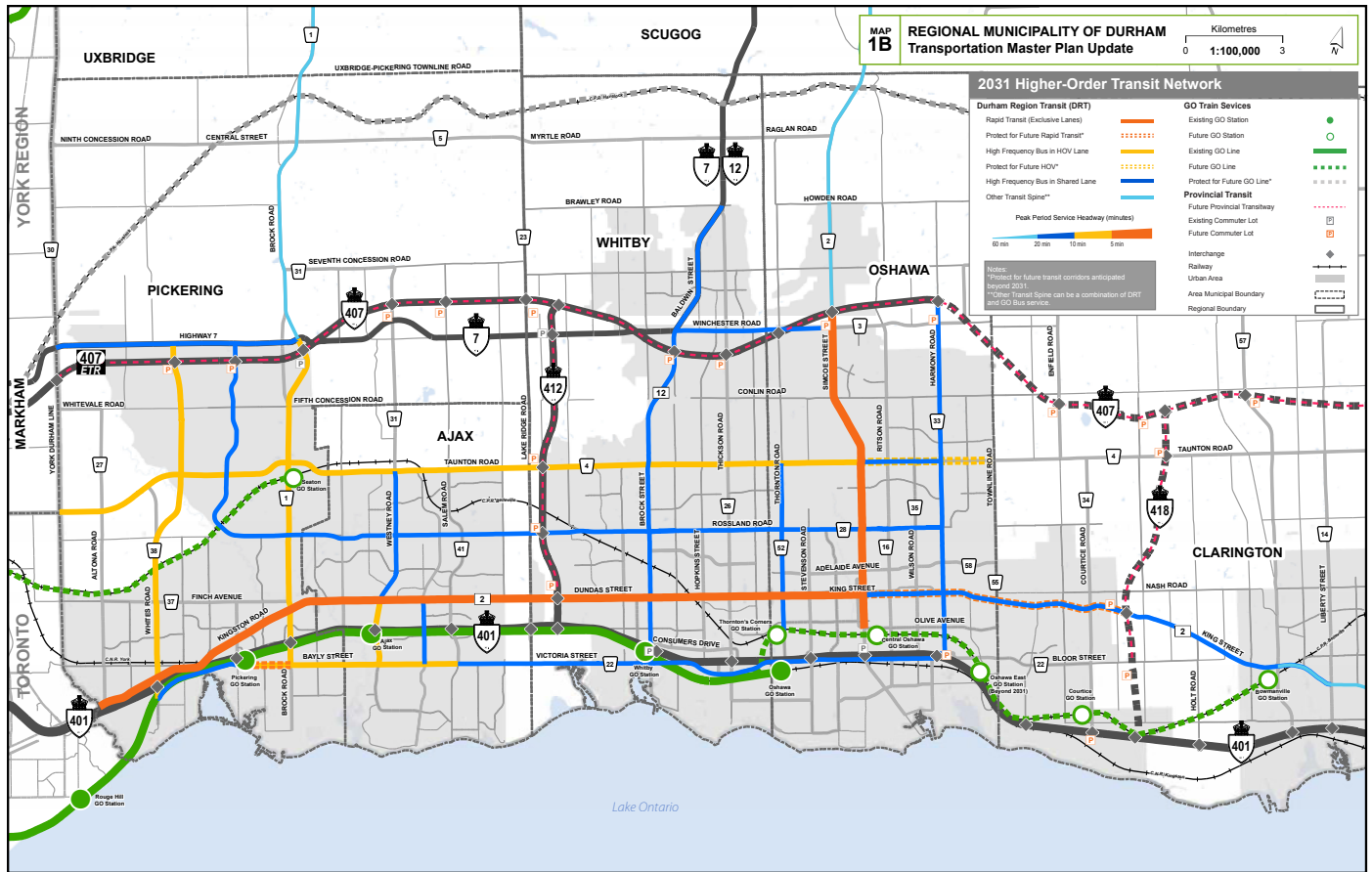


Figure 3: Durham Region TMP (2017) - 2031 Higher-Order Transit Network

Service operates every 15 minutes or better, seven days a week. Customers benefit from enhanced amenities on buses and at transit stops.

PULSE service is currently available on Highway 2, between the Centennial College / University of Toronto Scarborough Campus and downtown Oshawa, and on Simcoe Street, between south Oshawa and the Durham College / Ontario Tech north Oshawa Campus.

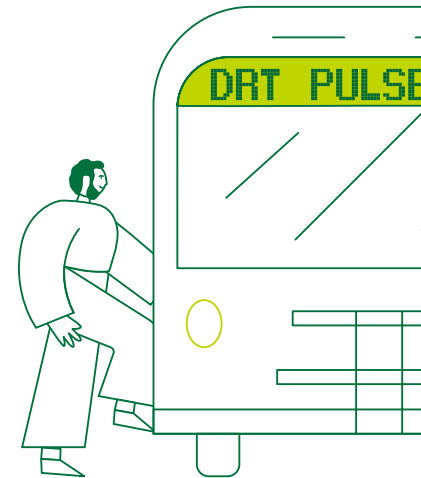
Based on the Region's Transportation Master Plan (Figure 3) and development of corridors in the Durham Official Plan / Envision Durham, future PULSE rapid bus corridors will be implemented by 2025:

- ➔ Taunton Road, between Westney Road and Harmony Terminal

- ➔ King Street East, between Oshawa Centre Terminal and Liberty Street in Bowmanville
- ➔ Rossland Road, between Brock Road (Pickering) and Harmony Terminal
- ➔ Highway 2 service extended to the Scarborough City Centre
- ➔ Simcoe Street extended to Windfields Farm Drive

Base and GO Connect routes

These scheduled services operate along busy corridors and in areas where 30-minute service can be sustained at or above the ridership productivity guidelines (see Appendix 1).



PULSE rapid bus service routes will increase from the current 2 routes to a total of 5 by 2025.



services through the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). Consistent with AODA policies, there is no change to the delivery of transit services provided to eligible residents.

When scheduled service is not available in some areas, customers will have access to Demand Response for their mobility needs. In urban areas, the Demand Response service will operate stop-to-stop within a zone, or to a scheduled route, terminal, or station. Customers in rural areas will benefit from the same level of service, however pick ups and drop offs are made at the curb. Customers with established eligibility for specialized services will continue to be picked up and dropped off at their original destination.

Local Area Transit Plans

Local Area Transit Plans (LATP) focus on transit services in specific growth areas of the Region where the urban fabric continues to develop. The plans will provide residents with a future state of transit service and transitional principles to service as the area matures.

A full engagement strategy will be used to work with local municipalities, residents and businesses to develop fulsome LATPs.

LATPs will be developed for the following areas:

- Bowmanville (Clarington)
- Newcastle (Clarington)
- Courtice (Clarington)
- Kedron and Windfields areas (Oshawa)
- Port Perry (Scugog)
- Seaton (Pickering)
- Brooklin (Whitby)

Local Area Transit Plans will be developed in 7 urban areas where the urban fabric continues to develop and mature.

Demand Response services will deliver a seamless and equitable service for all residents.

Base routes operate along major corridors throughout the Region at least every 30 minutes. GO Connect routes are peak-period services that connect residential areas and nearby GO stations, where demand warrants. These services often replace Demand Response services during busy commute periods.

During periods where demand is low, scheduled service may be replaced with Demand Response service. Scheduled service will facilitate cross-regional travel and connect Durham Region with neighbouring York Region and Toronto.

Demand Response

Since September 2020, DRT has operated two Demand Response services: the Demand Response service in rural and low-ridership urban areas for all customers; and Specialized Services, focused on transportation for eligible persons with disabilities who are unable to use conventional transit service. Adopting the recommendation from the Rural Review study in 2019, On Demand and Specialized Services will be merged as Demand Response services to deliver a seamless and equitable service for all residents.

This change does not impact a customer's eligibility for specialized



Service and fare integration

Travel between Durham Region and the rest of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) provides residents access to job opportunities, health services, schools, and leisure activities.

Customers crossing municipal boundaries continue to face barriers to competitive transit service, including:

- Forced to transfer between DRT and other transit providers to continue their journey instead of a one-seat ride.
- Paying a double fare when transferring between DRT and other transit providers, such as GO Transit and Toronto Transit Commission (TTC).

To create a seamless experience for customers, DRT will:

- Explore service options between Durham Region and York Region.
- Continue to work with the provincial table to reduce transfers through enhanced cross-boundary services and fare integration between the City of Toronto and outlying regions.

Infrastructure

Stations, terminals and hubs

Effective infrastructure is key to providing convenient on-street and off-street transfer points—between and among regional rail and bus service, scheduled DRT routes and Demand Response services—particularly for customers with limited abilities. A separate initiative will influence how



to best leverage this infrastructure for customer transfers between scheduled routes and Demand Response services.

Stations and terminals are the anchor points of the transit system. GO Transit train stations and DRT terminals are generally the busiest locations in DRT's system. This is where many customers either start and end their journey, or transfer to another service. DRT does not own any station or terminal infrastructure; several existing terminals are at or near capacity; and stakeholders have initiated planning and design work to expand and improve these facilities. Targeting investment at these locations will benefit most customers.

Hubs will provide convenient on-street transfer points between scheduled and Demand Response services and active transportation. The active transportation network provides a vital link between a customer's origin and destination and DRT service.

Hubs are transfer points between transit services and different modes of travel. They will include enhanced shelters, amenities and improved on-road facilities to accommodate multiple vehicles and vehicle types.



Bus stops

Bus stops are the first point of contact between customers and the transit service. Transit stops will be enhanced to provide an informative and pleasant environment.

- All bus stops will have a hard surface by 2025.
- Bus stops will link to the active transportation network.
- Shelters will be installed at stops with more than 20 daily boardings and at transfer points between multiple routes. They will also be consistent with DRT's social equity guidelines: installed at sensitive land use locations, such as hospitals and seniors' residences.

Compared to regular on-street bus stops, hubs will include enhanced shelters, amenities and improved on-road facilities to accommodate multiple vehicles and vehicle types. Hubs will be:

- Linked into the surrounding active transportation network and include bike racks.
- Strategically located to allow for easy transfers between scheduled and Demand Response services.
- Designed to accommodate customer accessibility requirements and future mobility opportunities.
- Created in collaboration with our partners on the regional and local cycling plans to ensure cycling infrastructure links with DRT services.
- Accommodating to cyclists, with bike racks installed at select stops across the network with the goal of having most of the urban area within a 10-minute bike ride of the PULSE network.

Wayfinding and customer information

Wayfinding and customer information provide the first opportunity to communicate with customers. Its ease of understanding and availability are key to attracting and retaining new customers and to ensure existing customers are aware of changes that may impact their journey.

An updated wayfinding initiative will leverage lessons learned from a Wayfinding Strategy Pilot with Metrolinx and place a priority on social equity and accessibility. The initiative will provide wayfinding and customer information that is easy to understand, while reducing barriers to accessing service.

Hubs will be accommodating to cyclists, with bike racks installed at select stops.





Transit priority

Transit priority measures provide enhanced speed and reliability for transit services—increasing the competitiveness of transit. Transit signal priority (TSP) makes it easier for buses to travel through intersections, which makes the journey faster for customers. It also helps to reduce resource requirements to operate similar levels of service on routes.

To enhance travel times on busy corridors, DRT has been working with regional partners to implement queue jump stops at busy intersections. Queue jump stops are those that allow buses to by-pass traffic queues at an intersection; using the right-turn lane and far side bus bays.

DRT will continue to advocate for additional transit priority measures at GO train stations. Many DRT routes converge at GO train stations and targeted improvements at these locations will benefit large numbers of customers. Reduced travel time into and out of GO stations will help position DRT as an attractive choice for residents considering DRT for travel to and from GO train stations.

A separate initiative will develop a strategy and tools to determine where, and which type of transit priority measures, should be deployed.

Supporting infrastructure and active transportation connections

High-quality active transportation connections are important to transit ridership. Transit customers begin and end their journeys—to and from their nearest transit stop—by either walking, cycling, or engaging in another form of transportation. Effective connections reduce the need to operate circuitous, low performing bus routes through local neighbourhoods to reach potential customers.

Most transit trips result in a return journey, with transit service operating on opposite sides of the street. A well-connected pedestrian network provides safe and convenient locations where customers can cross busy streets. Where they exist, bus stops are often co-located with traffic signals. Elsewhere, pedestrian crossovers, mid-block pedestrian signals and other appropriate facilities enhance pedestrian and transit user safety.

To ensure the transit network is accessible to all, DRT will work with:

- ➔ Local municipalities to identify gaps in the sidewalk and crosswalk network.
- ➔ Regional partners to influence pedestrian network design in new developments.

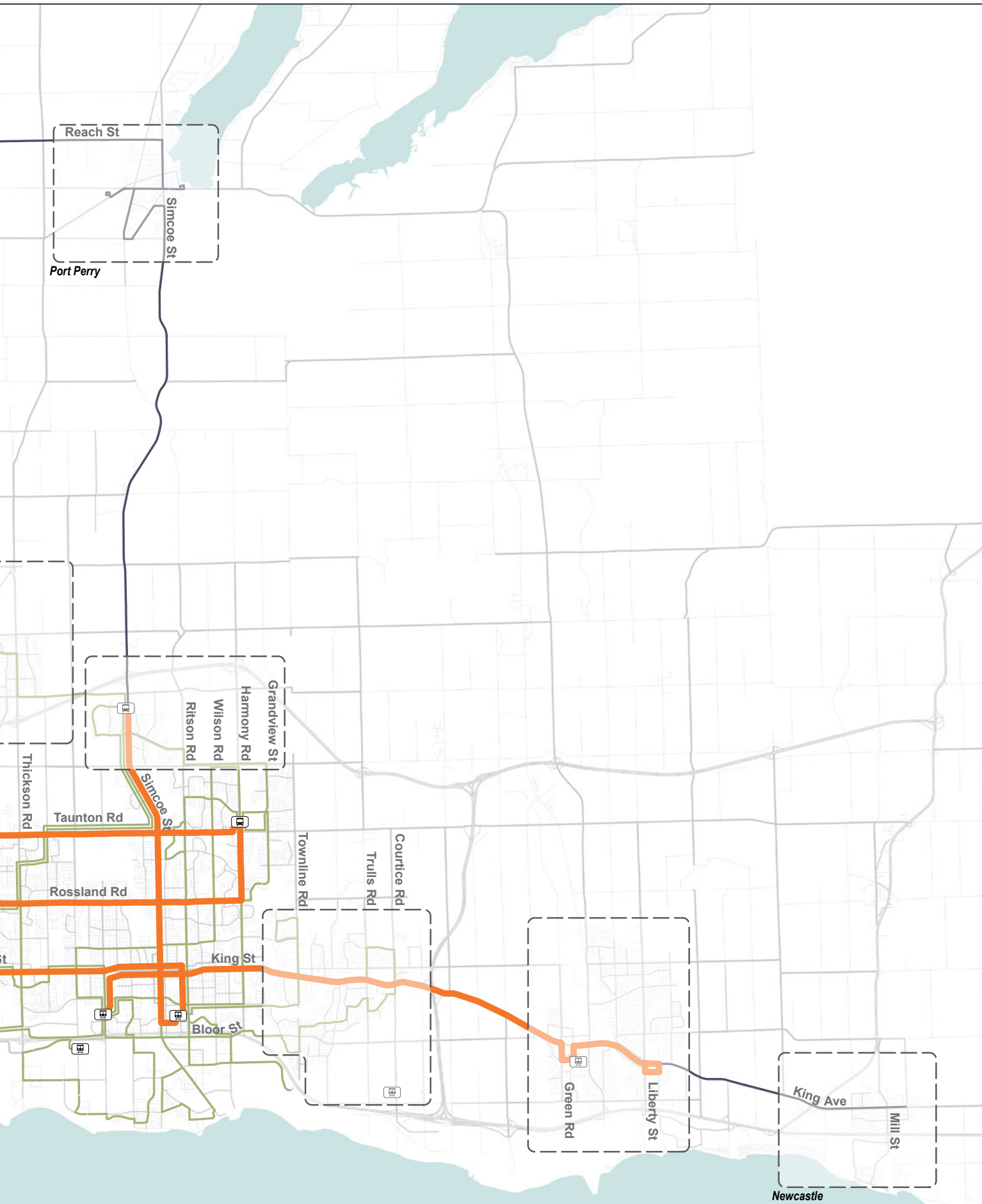
Mobility is changing fast. Scooters, for example, are becoming more popular in some jurisdictions. DRT is working to better understand emerging mobility options and protecting for these options in the design of future transit and stop areas.



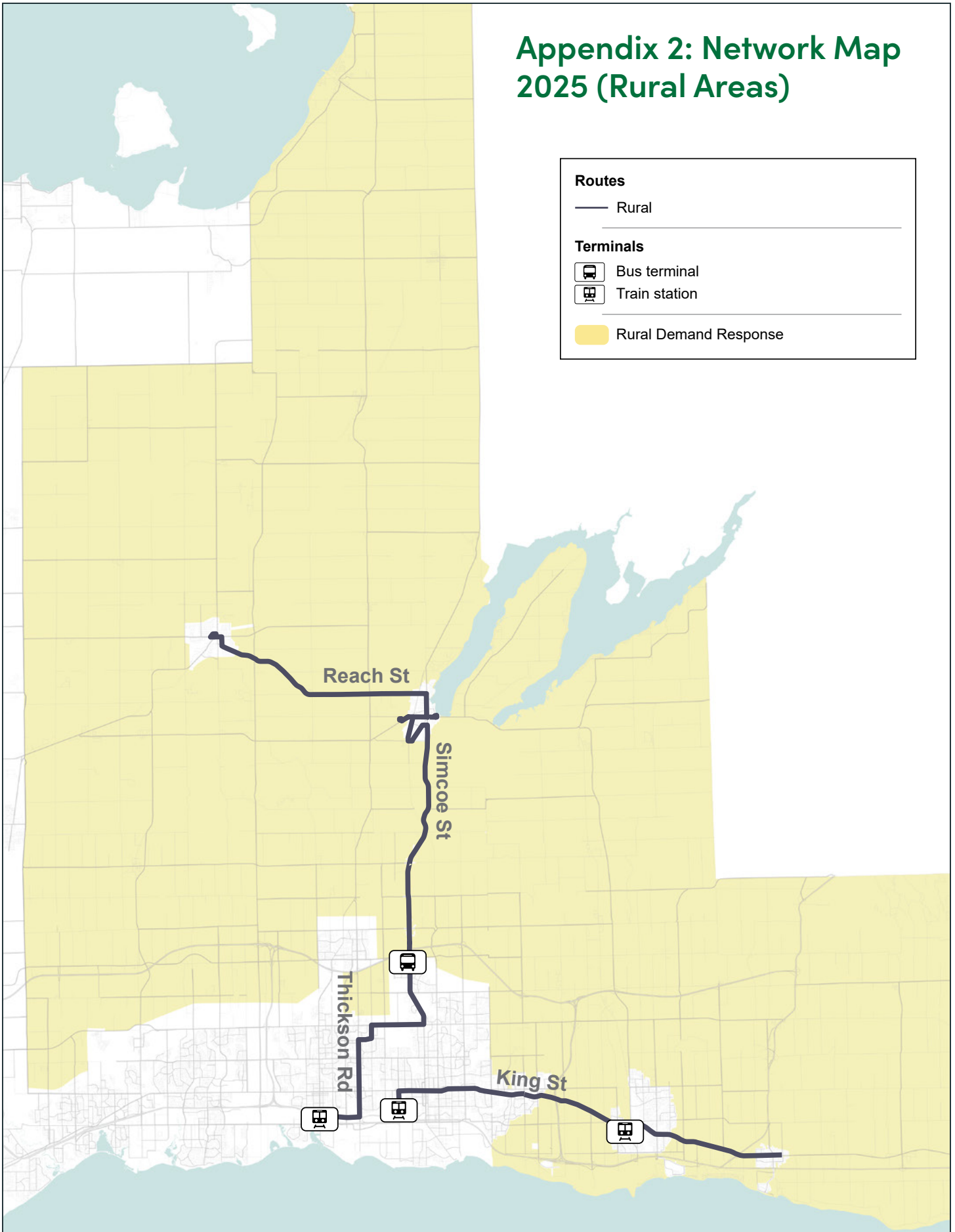
A well-connected pedestrian network provides safe and convenient locations where customers can cross busy streets.

Appendix 1: Network Map 2025





Appendix 2: Network Map 2025 (Rural Areas)



The following service guidelines can be found online at:

durhamregiontransit.com/serviceguidelines

- Service deployment
- Ridership productivity
- Service frequency
- Vehicle capacity
- Service proximity
- PULSE rapid bus considerations



If you require this information in an accessible format, please contact Durham Region Transit Customer Service at 1-866-247-0055. See DurhamRegionTransit.com for more information.

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