

Region of Waterloo
Planning, Development and Legislative Service
Community Planning

To: Committee of the Whole
Meeting Date: December 8, 2020
Report Title: Monitoring Change in the Central Transit Corridor, 2019 Report

1. Recommendation:

For information

2. Purpose / Issue:

To monitor progress on ION's two goals of 'moving people' and 'building community', the Central Transit Corridor (CTC) Monitoring Program measures and reports annually on indicators of the demographic, social, economic and environmental state of the Region's rapid transit corridor.

The purpose of this briefing note is to update Council on the change in the Central Transit Corridor from 2011, the year that the ION route was approved by Council, to 2019, the year in which ION began operations. A detailed report is attached and a dashboard is available.

Key Considerations:

Moving People

Mobility and Sustainable Modes of Transportation: The implementation of the ION LRT service in June 2019 had a significant impact on Regional transit ridership and particularly the ridership in the CTC. In 2019, there were 138,345 people per day who boarded or alighted a Grand River Transit (GRT) vehicle within the CTC, including conventional bus, express bus and ION light rail train, an increase of over 4,700 per day since the previous year. Overall ridership growth was 7.4% for the last 6 months of 2019, compared to a much lower growth of 1.2% in the first half of the year. More people were living in more walkable neighbourhoods, with 54 per cent living in 'high' or 'very high' walkable neighbourhoods.

Building Community

Vibrant Communities: By 2019, a fifth of the population of Waterloo Region, or 122,000 people, lived in the CTC. From 2011 to 2019, there were over 22,000 new

residents, or one-third of the Region's total growth, double the population growth rate outside the CTC. From 2018 to 2019, 42 per cent of the Region's population growth occurred inside the CTC, bringing over 3,000 more people to the corridor. Seventy per cent of all land use types in the Region can be found within the CTC.

Investment: A remarkable 45 per cent of new construction was within the CTC: permits were issued for 3,407 new residential units (54 per cent) and 600,000 square feet of new floor space – more than one-quarter of the total non-residential square footage added across the Region. The total cumulative building permit value since 2011 was \$3.2 billion.

The number of new developments and renovations are evident in assessment value growth from \$10 billion in 2011 to \$17 billion in 2019, an average annual increase of \$943 million (7.1 per cent). Municipal taxes generated on properties within the CTC were estimated at \$200 million in 2019, 50 per cent higher than in 2011.

Crime and Safety: Calls to police for reasons related to public perception (e.g., unwanted persons, liquor offenses, graffiti) have increased from 41 per cent in 2011 to 47 per cent in 2018. An increase was expected with more activity and people living in the corridor. Most calls that police respond to are not necessarily criminal in nature.

Arts and Culture: The percent of restaurants in the corridor continued to increase, currently estimated at 54 per cent, spurred on by an increase in take-out food.

Heritage: Heritage resources (defined as buildings built before 1920 or formally recognized) that were lost in 2019, increased to 20 – higher than in most years. Two of those were for formally recognized structure (listed on the Municipal Heritage Register or designated under the Ontario Heritage Act,) which is in line with most years.

Inclusive Community: Upward pressure in the housing market continued to decreased the number of affordable transactions inside the corridor and across the Region. In 2019, there were 1,041 residential resale transactions in the CTC, with 30 per cent considered affordable to low and medium-income earners. Only 15 per cent of transactions were affordable across the Region.

Two other affordability indicators are stable. There were 2,758 Community Housing units, a net gain of 71 (53 per cent) in the CTC. The increase of 57 units over 2018 is a result of the Stage 2 re-alignment. The percentage of households receiving rent assistance through the Housing Assistance with Supports (HAWS) program has remained at 56 per cent, indicating that people on this program continue to find affordable rental units within the CTC.

3. Background:

The CTC Monitoring Program was established in 2015. Indicators are updated annually

and reported to Council. It monitors change in the CTC throughout pre-construction, construction and post-construction/ operations. With previous reports, a specific theme such as the environment, gentrification and housing affordability has been explored. The theme of Mobility, which was originally scheduled for this report has been postponed. The Stage 2 ION alignment was approved in 2019, necessitating an adjustment of the CTC map and data in this report.

Area Municipality Communication and Public/Stakeholder Engagement:

Nil

4. Strategic Plan:

The monitoring report provides information to support the focus areas of Sustainable Transportation and Environment and Climate Action.

5. Financial Implications:

There were no additional operating or capital costs associated with the production of the Monitoring Change in the CTC 2019 Monitoring Report.

6. Conclusion / Next Steps:

The CTC Monitoring program is scheduled to continue in 2021 and 2022.

7. Attachments / Links:

Attachment 1: [Monitoring Change in the CTC 2019 Report](#)

Attachment 2: [Link to previous Monitoring Change in the CTC reports](#)

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