

Special City Council Meeting Agenda

Consolidated as of January 25, 2019



Tuesday, January 29, 2019 – 6:00 p.m.
Council Chambers, Guelph City Hall, 1 Carden Street

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Changes to the original agenda have been highlighted.

Open Meeting – 6:00 p.m.

Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and General Nature Thereof

Special Council – Transit Business Service Review

PS-2019-02 Guelph Transit Business Service Review Final Report

Delegations:

On Behalf of KidsAbility Centre for Child Development - KAYAC:

Doug Briggs

Maddy Workman

Sarah Christensen

Jordan Tucker

Jacob Riddle

John Marchese

Mara Bender

Barbara Sim

Steven Petric, Chair, Transit Action Alliance of Guelph

Correspondence:

Transit Action Alliance of Guelph (TAAG)

Steven Petric

Presentation:

Colleen Clack, Deputy CAO, Public Services

Katherine Gray, Program Manager, Business Process Management

Robin Gerus, General Manager, Guelph Transit

Recommendation:

1. That staff be directed to proceed with the implementation of the recommendations outlined in Report # PS-2019-02 "Guelph Transit Business Service Review Final Report" dated January 29, 2019.
2. That the 2019 operating impact of \$498,000 be referred to the operating budget deliberation on March 5, 2019.

Special Resolutions**Adjournment**



RESPONSE TO TRANSIT BUSINESS SERVICE REVIEW

January 2019

Transit Action Alliance of Guelph (TAAG)

ABOUT

TRANSIT ACTION ALLIANCE OF GUELPH (TAAG)

Established in 2018, the Transit Action Alliance of Guelph, Inc. (TAAG) is a broad based, non-profit community organization, which works cooperatively to promote better public transportation.

Our mission is the advocate for a public transportation system that is frequent, accessible and affordable.

Our vision is to educate, motivate, advocate, and activate the community on transit.

This report was prepared by a Working Group of the Transit Action Alliance of Guelph and contains contributions from various members.

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Summary

The Transit Action Alliance Guelph (TAAG) is happy to see that the Transit Business Service Review (Review) puts Guelph Transit on par or surpassing the service levels and performance of other comparable municipalities. We believe there is great opportunity, via a Transit Strategy and then later Route Review, to further improve service levels and performance even more.

There are twelve recommendations resulting from the Review. These recommendations include options around staffing and service level changes, service standards, funding and fare pricing guidelines, and investigating the viability and feasibility of new technology options.

While TAAG agrees with some of the recommendations, we do have concerns with some timelines and methods.

- TAAG feels that the scope of the Review was limited and did not allow for progressive results to guide improvement to public transit within Guelph.
- The Review analysis indicates that Guelph Transit's net cost to provide service is on par with other municipalities, but Guelph's expenses are on the rise. Rising cost is offset by some of the highest ridership and revenue compared to other municipalities. More high frequency routes will continue to drive ridership up and increase revenue via fare revenue, Gas Tax and other grants.
- The third-party engagement activity and Online survey part of the Review indicated that overall satisfaction with Guelph Transit service is at 69 per cent and is higher than most comparator systems. TAAG also points out that the survey results indicate that most users are **somewhat (satisfied) to very satisfied**. This indicates that there is room for improvement, no matter how big or small, to increase satisfaction.
- The Review's reliability of service component indicated there was an average of 3.6 per cent of all runs dropped or missed. While this number tells part of the story, TAAG has heard from many customers that sometimes their bus did not arrive, and when they contacted the Guelph Transit office, they were told that the tracking software indicated that the bus had arrived. TAAG believes that the number of missed routes is being underreported due to this possible technology failure or human error.
- TAAG is pleased that the Review did not identify any obvious advantages or savings to using alternate service delivery models compared with the approach used by Guelph. We believe there is enough evidence to show that contracting out services does not improve service or save transit systems money.

The remarks that follow explain some of our concerns. They also offer ideas, suggestions, and recommendations to taking a different approach to implementing some of the Review's twelve recommendations.

Responses to Recommendations

TRANSIT ACTION ALLIANCE OF GUELPH (TAAG)

1. SERVICE STANDARDS RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1: Recommend setting a funding and fare pricing policy based on a target net revenue to cost (R/C) ratio range of between 40 and 45 per cent to support service and ongoing service improvements while reducing the potential financial impacts to customers

TAAG Response

We support the general targets presented in the report with the understanding that the variability of conditions may change. We recommend timely reviews of these targets and maintaining the municipal funding subsidy levels, while keeping in mind that any increase in fares will negatively impact ridership and, therefore, revenue.

2. SERVICE EXPANSION AND GROWTH

RECOMMENDATION 2: Recommend the expansion and rebranding of the Community Bus program from the current two-bus service to six buses by 2020. Engagement, route review and capital investment activity should occur in 2019, with operationalization in 2020. This will provide improved service levels and options for riders.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Recommend conducting an operational level route review in 2019/2020 as well as continuous route audits. Hire a contract route planning position.

The route review will look at both holistic system changes as well as individual route modifications including: a. Identifying opportunities to move to a blended network with hub and spoke, spine (grid), perimeter and express routes. b. Identifying individual route structure and frequency to best meet the needs of the ridership

RECOMMENDATION 4: Recommend updating the Transit Growth Strategy (Transit Strategic Plan) to provide direction for conventional and mobility service to 2040, supporting the Corporate Transportation Master Plan Ensure the scope of activity includes the assessment and potential impacts of the following.

- Market growth and impacts
- Inter-regional transit
- Transit priority options
- Technology developments (electric fleet)
- Light rail transit (LRT) and/or bus rapid transit (BRT)

TAAG Response

Following on the heels of this comprehensive and technically-driven Transit Review, we recommend that the city hear from citizens on how transit could best serve their needs and what choices (tradeoffs) would best reflect their values.

TAAG recognizes that recent city growth, levels of available funding, and trends in numbers of transit riders result in an increasing challenge to continue effectively delivering transit service. A new approach is needed, grounded in a community conversation about the role of transit in our future city.

TAAG feels that the order for doing these 3 recommendations, as outlined in the presentation provided by City Staff, is not technically correct.

A Transit Strategy provides a strong foundation to build a comprehensive plan for public transit, **provides the direction for Route Reviews and Community Bus program review**, and will help define the long-term vision for transit service in Guelph.

While TAAG does support the expansion and re-branding of the Community Bus, TAAG recommends proceeding with a minor route review to adjust routes where issues are present, and focus energy on developing a **Vision for Transit** first, which would provide direction for updating the Transportation Master Plan and help define where to put transit services.

TAAG agrees with the best practices outlined in the report of maintaining certain average number of passengers per vehicle hour.

3. SERVICE REDUCTION

RECOMMENDATION 5: Recommend discontinuing morning shuttle service (pilot project) to Guelph Central Station effective Q2 2019.

TAAG Response

While any service reduction has an impact on ridership, TAAG understands that the morning shuttle service was a pilot project and it did not see the uptake as projected. However, we would like to point out that there was very little effort to inform GO Transit users and the general public of this service option. Our own research indicates many riders, when told of this service, simply did not know it existed, and many would have used it if they had known about it.

We recommend that the City reconsider the full cancellation of this service and instead considered cheaper alternative partnerships, such as a Trans-Cab service, until the Route Review and/or Transit Strategy is completed, which may recommend the extension of the start time of transit services to cover the early GO Transit trains.

4. SERVICE ADMINISTRATION

RECOMMENDATION 6: Recommend the review and renewal of the CoFare contract with Metrolinx in 2019, to be consistent with the fare management process and other transit facilities that utilize a CoFare agreement. The agreement requires revision to reflect current fare rates and include recurring renewal dates to ensure ongoing accuracy of rates.

TAAG Response

TAAG supports the review and renewal of the Co-Fare contract with Metrolinx. This allows for seamless trips between GO and Guelph Transit and makes switching between transit systems simple and hassle-free, solves the “last mile” problems many municipalities encounter, removes cars from the road to help reduce costs for the city and benefiting the environment, and potentially creates new long term regular transit users.

TAAG disagrees with how the assessment was completed and the recommendation to increase the co-fare to **as high as \$1.30 per trip**.

The average co-fare between GO Transit and other participating transit systems is **\$0.71**. The majority of these base their price off of either the lowest fare available (i.e tickets) or the cash fare.

Guelph Transit currently collects \$0.60 per trip along with a subsidy of \$1.70 provided by Metrolinx equaling \$2.30. The current Adult ticket fare is \$2.80.

For every rider Guelph Transit gets, it receives money from the Gas Tax from the Provincial and Federal Governments. With that funding, combined with the cash fare paid by the GO user and the subsidy provided by Metrolinx, the Co-Fare is **Revenue Neutral** for Guelph Transit.

TAAG recommends that a modest increase of up to \$0.20 (33%) be put into place making the co-fare \$0.80. This small increase will continue make the Co-Fare **Revenue Neutral** based on the current Cash Fare of \$3.00 and be on par with other transit systems using the co-fare program. TAAG also recommends that for any future increases, that the Co-Fare not exceed \$1.00 per trip.

RECOMMENDATION 7: Recommend the development and implementation of an operator recertification program with dedicated training hours to improve service reliability, reduce risk and ensure we are inline with industry standards.

TAAG Response

TAAG fully support the development and implementation of an operator recertification program.

RECOMMENDATION 8: Recommend adjusting the staffing structure to:

a. Better align the management structure to support efficient and effective management of the core business and be in line with industry standards, and b. provide a dedicated Human Resources staff position to better support Transit return to work and wellness initiatives as well as address ongoing recruitment and retention challenges

TAAG Response

TAAG agrees with making the management structure meet Industry standards.

We are supportive of a dedicated HR staff person, possibility not FTE (Full Time Equivalent). We recommend **dedicated Customer Service staff** that would include coverage of the morning and evening peak service periods along with the regular service. Additional Customer Support should be considered for weekends, holidays and evenings in the coming years.

RECOMMENDATION 9: Recommend that vehicle maintenance cost reporting be separated into two line items, one that reports asset specific maintenance costs and one that reports the remaining costs associated with internal fleet services.

TAAG Response

TAAG fully supports the recommendation to separate vehicle maintenance costs into two separate line items. This will assist in showing better transparency and performing a clear cost analysis of maintaining assets.

5. TECHNOLOGY GROWTH

RECOMMENDATION 10: Recommend to implement the new fare box program with the capability for reusable tap and go passes (smart cards). Utilization of smart card capable fare boxes will also validate fare box data and address inconsistency in current fare box cash fare reporting.

TAAG Response

TAAG is in support of the implementation of a new fare box program which, along with a full fare strategy review, will allow greater and easier access to transit services. We recommend that there be full consultation with various stakeholders, such as poverty groups, as there have been concerns raised in other communities regarding access via smart card technology. By researching other transit systems experiences and consulting with community groups and organizations, the city will be able to get ahead of any concerns or issues brought forward.

RECOMMENDATION 11: Recommend the development and pilot program for Intelligent On-Demand Transit software with the Mobility Service, to improve service availability and service options. This activity should also test the feasibility and potential capacity for low-density and low utilization area.

TAAG Response

While we support the use of on demand technology to assist with mobility users, we recommend that the city determine if the appropriate customer base would use it.

We are cautious of using this technology beyond mobility on low ridership routes until a Transit Strategy then Route Review is completed.

6. SERVICE RELIABILITY

RECOMMENDATION 12: Stabilization of workforce to ensure sustainable provision of current level of service through base staffing increase of 19 operators, to be achieved through annual budget increases of \$260,000 per year over six years.

TAAG Response

We support the hiring of more drivers possibly at a faster rate to help reduce overtime quicker.

Service reliability can also be improved via capital investments for such as Transit Priority Measures, changing the walking distance between stops, digital signage at busy transfer points, and increased frequency.

In conclusion, TAAG's ideas and suggestions throughout this booklet show that while we agree with some recommendations we have concerns with others.

We hope you will take our ideas and suggestions into consideration as you discuss and deliberate the results of the Transit Business Service Review and decided on the next actions to improve Guelph Transit.

From the desk of Steven Petric

The following are some of my own personal thoughts on the 2019 Guelph Transit Business Service Review Final Report and Recommendation 3 & 4.

Our transit system can only support our city to the extent that our city supports transit. Transit is part of our city, so it is part of a complex system. Our city is growing up, in, and out. All of the diverse aspects of our city - its people, places, infrastructure, and activities - shape how our transit system works. A transit system for all Guelphites is influenced by many factors:

- Where people are going - whether to a shopping centre, downtown, a university or a recreation facility - is shaped by how our city is planned. Quality transit service is influenced by quality land use planning.
- The design of our neighbourhoods is shaped by the process of land development and renewal. Quality transit service is influenced by the quality of neighbourhood planning and urban design.
- Perception of security in our city is shaped by complex and interconnected social factors, such as poverty and racism, which can be amplified in a shared space like transit. While the transit system cannot resolve these issues, it can contribute to solutions, thereby improving the transit experience for all.

In these and many ways, the future success of transit is influenced by our ability to transform Guelph's urban form, create great neighbourhoods, and address our social challenges. As Guelph fast approaches a population of 140,000, and moves towards a city of 190,000, it is imperative that the Transit Strategy be considered a first priority and considered within the overall context of our vision for the city. While our foundational strategic plans – Transportation Master Plan, Official Plan etc., provide an overall direction, a Transit Strategy can provide the additional definition needed to chart a course for future success.

Under Recommendation 3, the Consultant points out that we need to discuss Coverage vs Utilization (Ridership) goals. The current practice being done today, putting higher levels of service where demand is higher, while trying to maintain the walking distances for a Coverage based system is not working. While this is Transit's goal, this is not necessarily the communities' goal at the moment.

By performing a Transit Strategy, we can bring awareness, gather ideas, prioritize ideas, and explore the tradeoffs.

- Bringing **Awareness about the Transit Strategy** would spark a discussion about transit's role in helping to build the city's future, set the context for conversations about transit, its role in city-building, and how choices (tradeoffs) about how transit build and run the transit system have social, environmental, and economic implications.
- The conversation would then move from to discussing an aspirational, but achievable, **vision for transit** in our city. Engagement about this in both public and targeted workshops with questions focused on sharing stories and personal thoughts/experiences with transit, both in Guelph and elsewhere.

- Gather “blue sky” ideas about transit from various members of the community and Staff.
- Take the common themes that will emerge from these workshops and consultations and ask people to identify their top priorities.
- Once the top priorities are identified, we need to **understand what trade-offs** people were willing to make and why. We asked participants about the transit network, investment in transit, and fares.

A Transit Strategy is a high level strategy that provides a comprehensive and integrated perspective on the transit system, including bus rapid transit (BRT), Conventional Bus, Express Buses, Community Buses, and Mobility.

A good Transit Strategy can include some of the following areas/pillars:

- Integrate transit with community planning and design
- Establish a balanced approach to operating funding and fare policy
- Develop a market responsive approach to transit network design
- Improve the customer experience
- Develop transit organizational capacity

Within each Pillar, a set of Guiding Principles would outline the Strategy goals, and corresponding Actions would detail the activities necessary to achieve these goals. The Strategy also can contain the outline of a conceptual transit network design, identification of the components of a comprehensive Transit Service Policy, a framework for implementation, and a performance monitoring approach to track progress over time.

Some of these items in this report indicate they are already in motion instead of being done as one comprehensive strategy. Putting the cart before the horse means we will be trying to piece it all together in the end and that has been shown not to work very well.

By Building the strategy first with the input from thousands of Guelphites, and responding to their priorities through a market based approach; we could see our transit system focus on things such as customer service, high frequency routes, and a service that is convenient and reliable.

By pursuing a suite of Guiding Principles and Actions, the Transit Strategy can result in a transit system that contributes to our city-building vision by supporting mobility, connectivity, integration and sustainability.

At the end of the day, the objective should be to provide a transit system **shaped by what Guelphites want**, which will encourage more citizens to choose transit.

I have included a blog posting and chart from Jarret Walker, Transit Consultant, and author of *Human Transit: How clearer thinking about public transit can enrich our communities and our lives*. This is available to borrow from the Guelph Public Library.

Thank you for reading this and please contact me to ask any questions!



Human Transit

The professional blog of public transit consultant Jarrett Walker.

“Abundant Access”: a map of a community’s transit choices, and a possible goal of transit

Posted on March 10, 2013 in **Access, Basics, Modeling**

In my book *Human Transit*, I argued that the underlying geometry of transit requires communities to make a series of choices, each of which is a tradeoff between two things that are popular. I argued that these hard choices are appropriate assignments for elected boards, because there is no *technical* ground for making one choice or the other. What you choose should depend on what your community wants transit to do. Examples of these choices include the following:

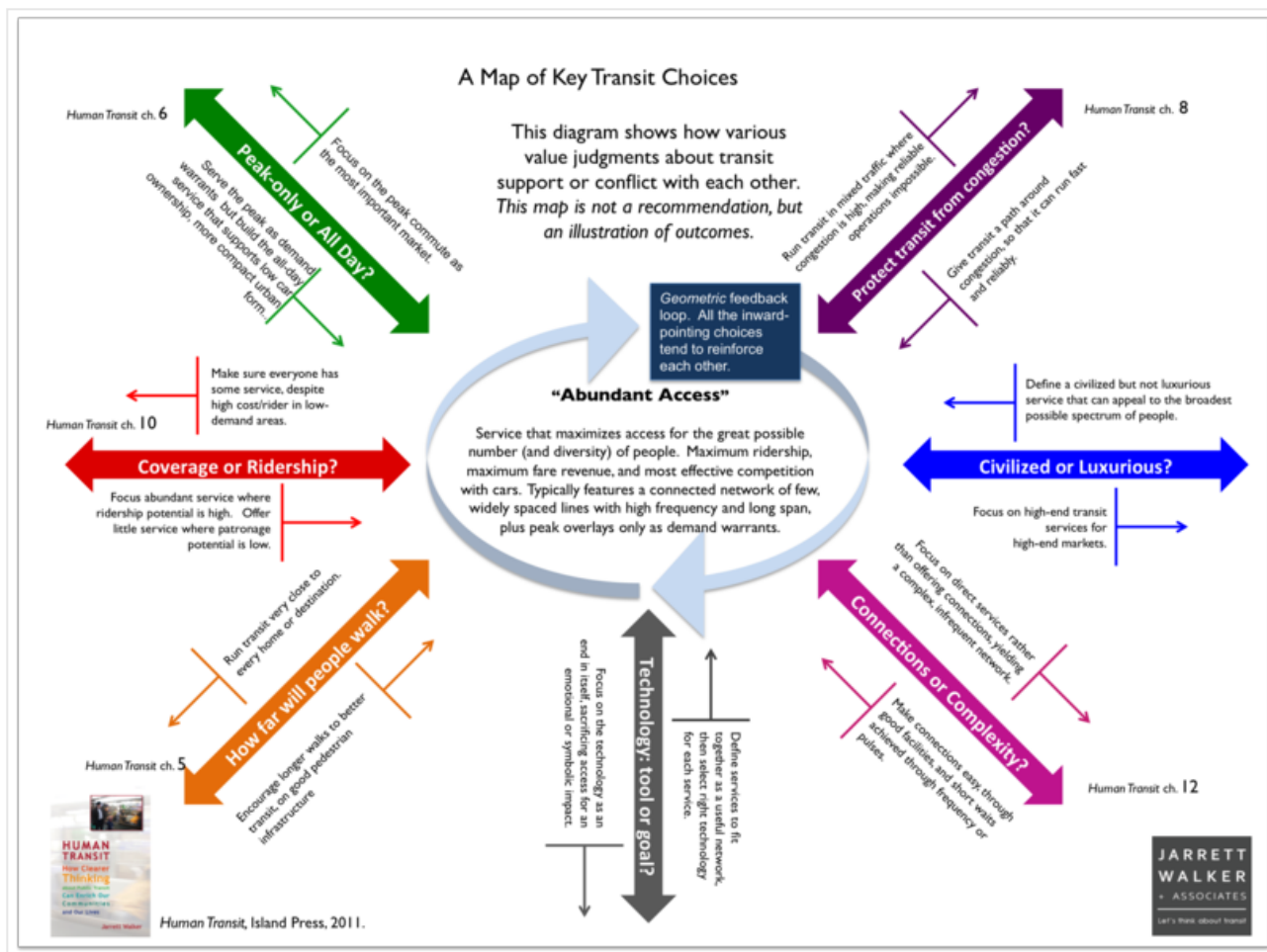
- **Ridership or Coverage?** Should transit agencies be maximizing their ridership, which is easily done by abandoning service to low-ridership areas, or should they spread out service throughout their service area so that everyone has some service, despite the predictably low ridership that results. (*HT* Chapter 10)
- **Connections or Complexity?** If you try to design a transit network in which people won’t have to transfer, you’ll end up with a network with high complexity and low frequency. I first explained this [here](#), and later, and more rigorously, in *HT* Chapter 12.
- **Peak-first or all day?** While it’s widely assumed that transit is most productive during the peak, this is not always the case, because service

running only on the peak, and especially only in one direction, can be massively expensive to operate. Should the peak commuter be the primary focus of a transit network even given these costs, or should a transit agency seek to build an all-day network of services that encourages reliance on transit at all hours, while still meeting peak capacity needs? (*HT* Chapter 6).

- **How far do you assume people will walk?** Assuming higher walking distances allows transit lines and stops to be further apart, increasing both speed and frequency. Research has found repeatedly that people will walk further to better service, though when you first propose to increase walking distance they will complain. This is an especially tough tradeoff because frail seniors and disabled people are small in numbers but have a particular aversion to walking. (*HT* Chapter 5).
- **Should transit be protected from congestion?** Doing so, by giving transit a lane (or trackway) not shared with traffic will dramatically improve reliability and thus the degree to which people will find they can trust the service. However, this requires a city to display a profound commitment to transit in the allocation of its streetspace. (*HT* Chapter 8).

Note that while the framing of these choices tends to make them sound binary (“Ridership or coverage?”) the choice is not between two boxes; it’s of a position on the spectrum where the two terms define the extremes. You don’t have to choose between ridership or coverage, for example, but you have to choose a point on the spectrum between them, and you have to accept the mathematical fact that, as on any spectrum, moving toward one extreme implies moving away from the other.

In the Epilogue of *HT* I briefly introduced the idea that for each of these choices, one option seems to trigger a positive-feedback loop, while the other option does not. Here is a new and expanded diagram of that idea. The image below is fuzzy, so download here: [Download Abundant access diagram streamlined '15-05-08](#) (Tip: Print it on A3 or 11×17. There’s a lot here.)



What do I mean by positive feedback loop? On each of these choices, the option that points toward the center leads to a particular kind of network that supports *all* of the goals implied by *all* the centerward choices. For example, if you plan your network for maximum ridership rather than coverage, you also generate a network that encourages higher walking distances, that supports easy connections rather than complexity, and that tends to present the strongest case for facilities that protect transit from congestion.

On the other hand, the options that point outward from the center tend *not* to support each other. You can achieve the goal implied by these outer choices, but (arguably with some exceptions) each one will require a separate effort. For example, if you believe walking distances to transit should be low, as seniors tend to advocate, then you need to put parallel transit routes — and the stops on those routes — very close together. This does nothing to advance any of the outer “outward” goals, whether it be growing peak demand, or avoiding connections, or achieving a luxurious experience that will compete with a BMW.

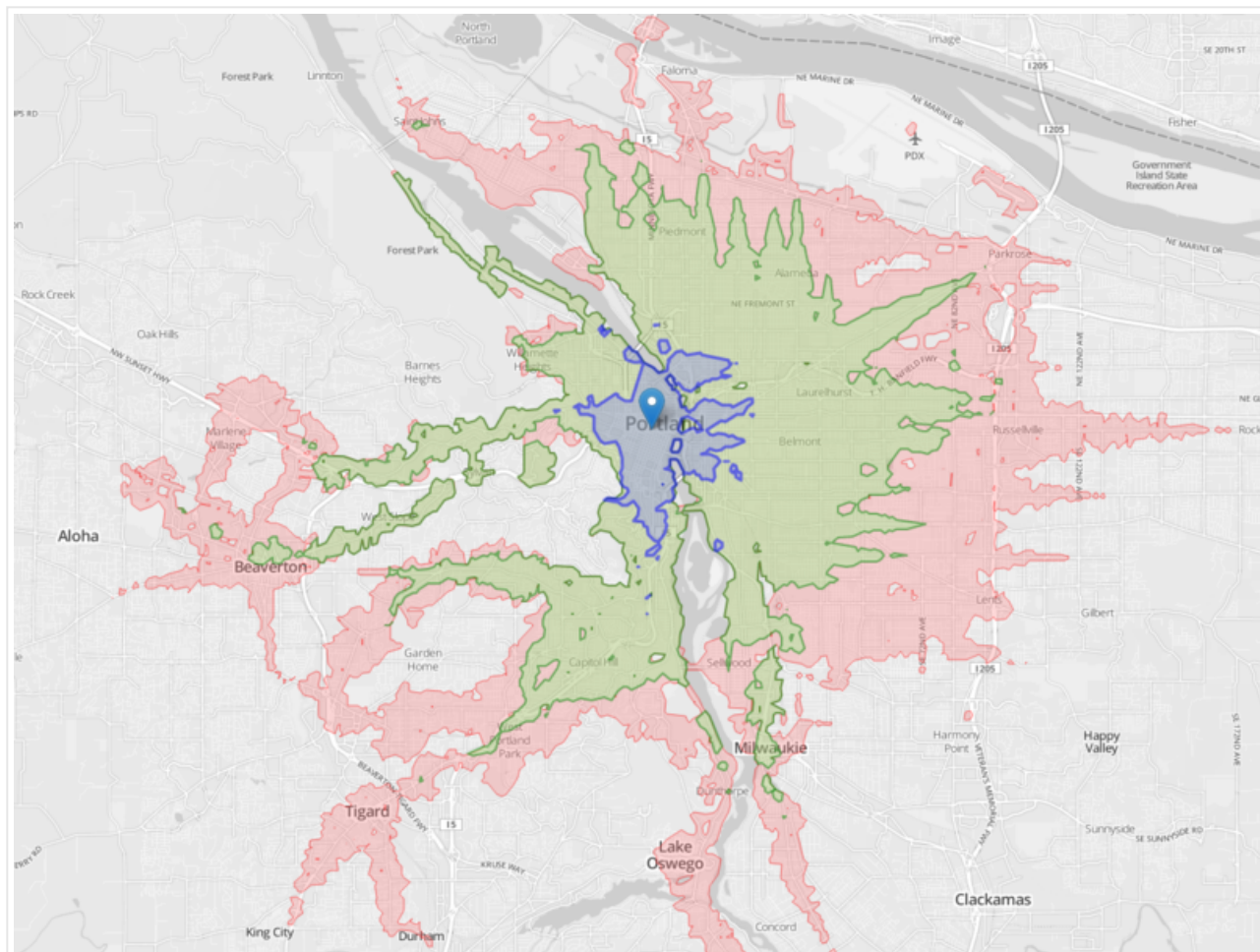
Another way of saying this is that the choices that point inward all point to a single set of network design principles, and a single set of consistent priorities, while the choices pointing outward lead to many *different* kinds of network design and competing priorities.

What happens when you move toward the center? These choices converge on a single, consistent goal that I propose to call *Abundant access*, which means:

The greatest possible number of jobs and other destinations are located within 30 minutes one way travel time of the greatest possible number of residents.

[Why 30 minutes? The question is tangential to my point, and other figures could be used, but if one has to pick a figure the most solid basis is Marchetti's constant, the idea that humans throughout history have tolerated about one hour of daily travel time. Obviously, shorter or longer periods may apply to trips other than the commute.]

For any individual, abundance of access can be visualized using a map of isochrones, like this one by Conveyal for downtown Portland, which shows the area you can get to within a fixed amount of time on some combination of transit and walking.



(In these maps, blue is a 15 minutes travel time, green is 30 minutes, and pink is 45 minutes. **Unlike some imitators**, these calculations include waiting time and therefore accurately convey the impact of frequency.)

Of course, any quantification of abundant access must consider not the area but the amount of stuff in it: jobs, retail, recreational opportunities, hospitals, all the things that form the universe of destinations. As a matter of public policy, it must also maximize over the largest possible share of the population. In the case of transit, the population over which abundant access is most cost-effectively maximized tends to be a more urban, high-density population, because among readily available measures, density is one that best predicts the intensity of ridership that will arise from a service investment. (Fortunately, that's fairer to than it sounds, because people living at high densities use much less road infrastructure per capita than people living at lower densities.)

The goal of abundant access has several kinds of appeal.

First, it can be measured objectively without recourse to psychology or culture. Ridership estimates are based heavily on travel times that approximate the notion of abundant access, but they also add psychological factors that are less stable, such as observed preferences for particular technologies. These factors may be emotionally vivid, but like many emotional factors they are likely to change with time and especially with generations — just as emotional attitudes toward cars are changing now. Abundant access measures a fact that is entirely objective — travel times. Unlike emotional reactions to technologies, the value of access has been constant across millennia of human experience.

Second, abundance of access is literally a quantification of *freedom*, in the sense that matters to us in transportation. Isochrone maps like [Mapnificent's](#), in particular, show us our freedom in a very immediate way: *here is where you are free to go, now*. Abundant access measures the transportation element of *opportunity* of all kinds, which is one of the main reasons people have moved to cities since their invention.

The concept of freedom is sadly undervalued in much urbanist discourse, and I am always looking for ways to reintroduce it. Much urbanist writing, for example, is blatantly prescriptive (“you should want this kind of community”), which feeds conservative stereotypes of urbanism as manipulative or coercive. We need to be able to talk not just about ideal communities but about freedom and personal responsibility, a frame in which all the great urbanist ideas — and all the urgent environmental imperatives — can be stated equally well. In that frame, the key idea is not “the good” but “choice,” where freedom of choices also implies responsibility for your choices.

So again, all of this work is descriptive, not prescriptive. I’m not saying that you should like the goal of abundant access; that would be value judgment, and you get to make those for yourself.

I am saying, though, that abundant access as an idea has certain features and consequences, including a tendency to be self-reinforcing. *As mapped along the various axes of choice, abundant access is a single consistent vision whereas the opposite choices lead to many unrelated visions.*

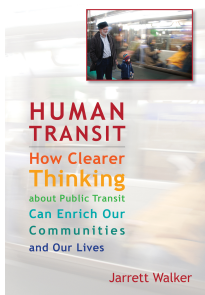
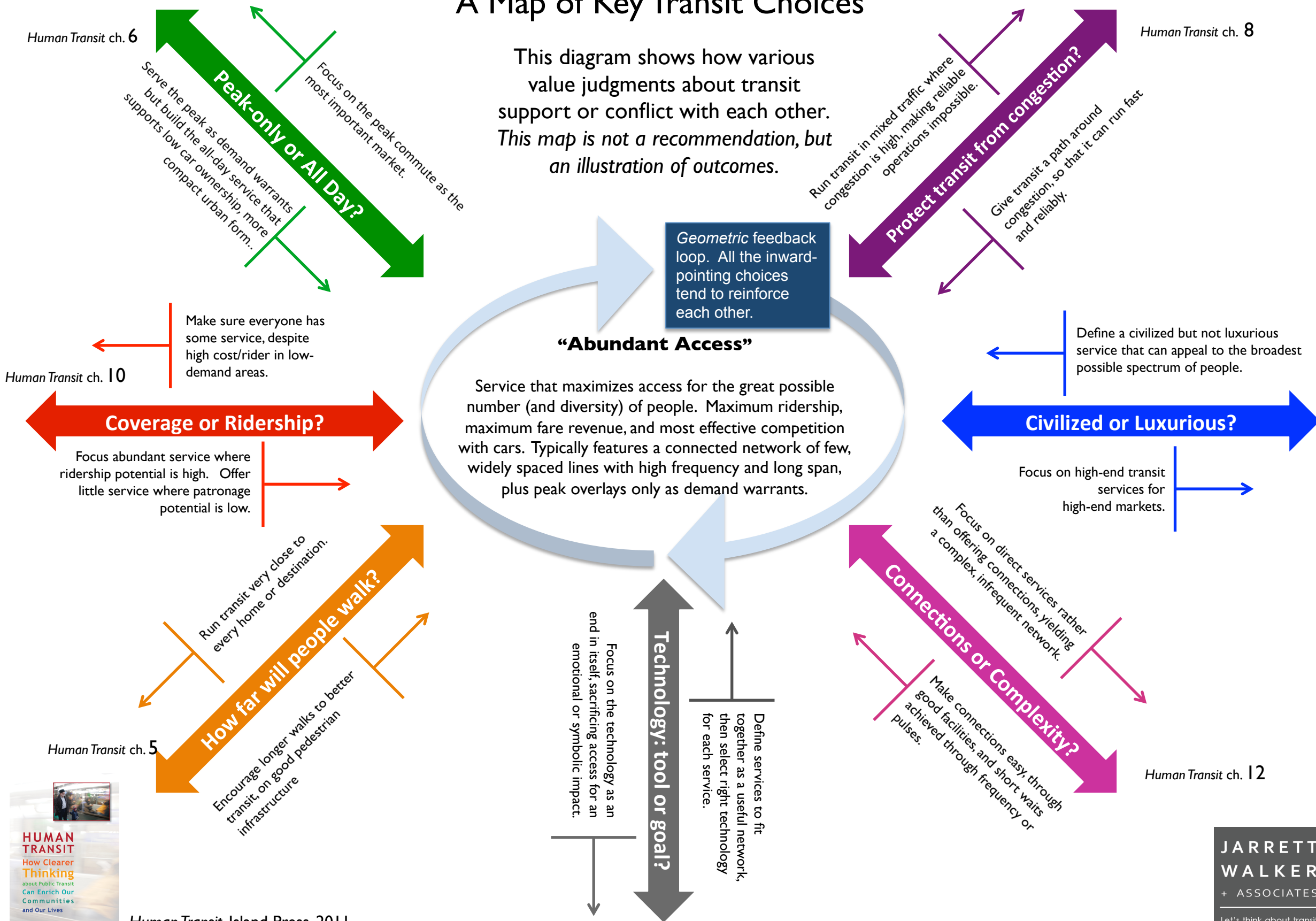
Still, you don't have to like it. My role, as always, is to describe consequences clearly, and help people choose.

[Updated 8 May 2015 with streamlined diagram.]

Related Posts

A Map of Key Transit Choices

This diagram shows how various value judgments about transit support or conflict with each other. *This map is not a recommendation, but an illustration of outcomes.*



Human Transit, Island Press, 2011.