



# Connecting the Southwest:

A draft transportation plan for southwestern Ontario

January 2020



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## Caroline Mulroney

Minister of  
Transportation

# Minister's Message

We know that a safe, efficient and connected transportation network is the foundation for a healthy and prosperous Ontario. That is why our government is committed to addressing the transportation needs of every region across the province.

Starting with southwestern Ontario, we are delivering on our promise to develop regional plans that will help build a better transportation system that will better serve individuals, families and workers.

People in southwestern Ontario need transportation that works for them – a safe and reliable system that connects smaller communities to larger centres; improves access to jobs and critical services; and supports an open and competitive business environment.

Our plan for southwestern Ontario will do just that – it includes more than 40 improvements and strategies across different modes of travel that will connect people to places; further build a strong and competitive economy; keep our highways safe and reliable; make life more convenient for travellers; and prepare us for the future. Our plan is a living document that will require continuing input, updates and improvements to stay relevant as the needs of people and businesses evolve over time and as technology advances.

This is a plan that will get people and goods moving. It includes a commitment to look at practical options for improvements to existing rail corridors and explores private-sector partnerships to optimize passenger and freight rail. It also includes improvements to the highway network and intercommunity bus services, as well as undertaking an airport activity and infrastructure survey to assess the role of airports in the region.

We know our vision for southwestern Ontario will not be complete without the valuable input of local municipalities, businesses, Indigenous communities and the general public. That is why we are inviting everyone to participate in this process by sharing their feedback with us. We are also establishing a task force with southwestern Ontario mayors and Indigenous chiefs to work together on ways to better connect bus, rail, transit services and ferries across the region.

I look forward to working together on a unified vision for southwestern Ontario's transportation network.

# Executive Summary

Whether you're visiting family, travelling with friends, commuting to work or going to school, getting around southwestern Ontario should be convenient and easy. That's why we have developed this plan to get people moving across southwestern Ontario.

Our plan is about connecting communities. It's about giving people in southwestern Ontario more options to get where they need to go, when they need to get there. Better transportation means that more people can access jobs and critical services, visit family and friends and see the region's many tourist destinations. When we improve the transportation network, we also support the economy and a better quality of life for Ontarians.

Connecting the Southwest outlines five goals to improve transportation in the region:

- Getting people moving and connecting communities
- Supporting a competitive open for business environment
- Improving safety
- Providing more choice and convenience
- Preparing for the future

The five goals include more than 40 improvements for public transit, rail, highways and more across the region. Our government is improving transit by providing \$14.8 million to 12 municipalities in southwestern Ontario as part of the Ontario Community Transportation Grant program. As part of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, we are committing more than \$103 million

for 10 transit projects in London. We are also exploring options to improve train service in the region, including working with VIA Rail on the potential to offer train service jointly with GO Transit. And we are establishing a task force to work together with municipalities and Indigenous communities to make it easier to transfer between different modes of transportation including car, bus, train, ferry, plane, bicycle and car.

We are keeping people and goods moving with actions that will invest in highways, improve safety and support the trucking industry, such as exploring opportunities to address the shortage of parking for truck drivers. We have invested \$31 million since 2018 to repair roads and bridges through the Connecting Links program. We are also keeping roads safe on key highways in the region, with projects including the widening of Highway 3 between the Town of Essex and Leamington, as well as widening and adding a concrete barrier on Highway 401 between London and Tilbury.

Our plan will give people more choice and convenience. We are using technology to make life easier for drivers, such as Ontario 511's Track My Plow feature that helps people plan their route by providing real-time updates on the locations of snow plows.

We are ensuring southwestern Ontario is prepared for future growth and the introduction of new technologies like connected and automated vehicles. Working together, we can help build a transportation network that will connect communities across the region.



# Introduction

Southwestern Ontario is home to more than 1.6 million people, and thriving manufacturing, health care and technology sectors. The region has over 2.3 million hectares of agricultural land and a growing agricultural sector that represents over 50 per cent of Ontario's farm income. It also has an agri-food sector that employs about 119,000 people across the region.

The planning area includes 88 municipalities, 10 First Nations communities and 5 Métis Community Councils. These communities span approximately 30,400 km<sup>2</sup> extending from Essex County in the west, Norfolk County in the east and Bruce and Grey Counties in the north. At its western edge, the region connects to the U.S. State of Michigan and to the east it connects to Wellington County, Waterloo Region, Brant County and the rest of the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH).

## Southwestern Ontario Transportation Network

**1,670 lane km**

of 400 series highway

**3,000 lane km**

of total provincial roadways



**1.65 million**

people over 30,400 square km



**2** international airports

**14** municipal airports



**Key economic sectors:**

manufacturing, health care, retail and agriculture

**2 of Canada's 3**

largest road and rail border gateways



**Over \$1.1 billion worth of goods**

travel on southwestern Ontario roads every day



**971,000 passengers**

travelled to or from southwestern Ontario using VIA Rail in 2018



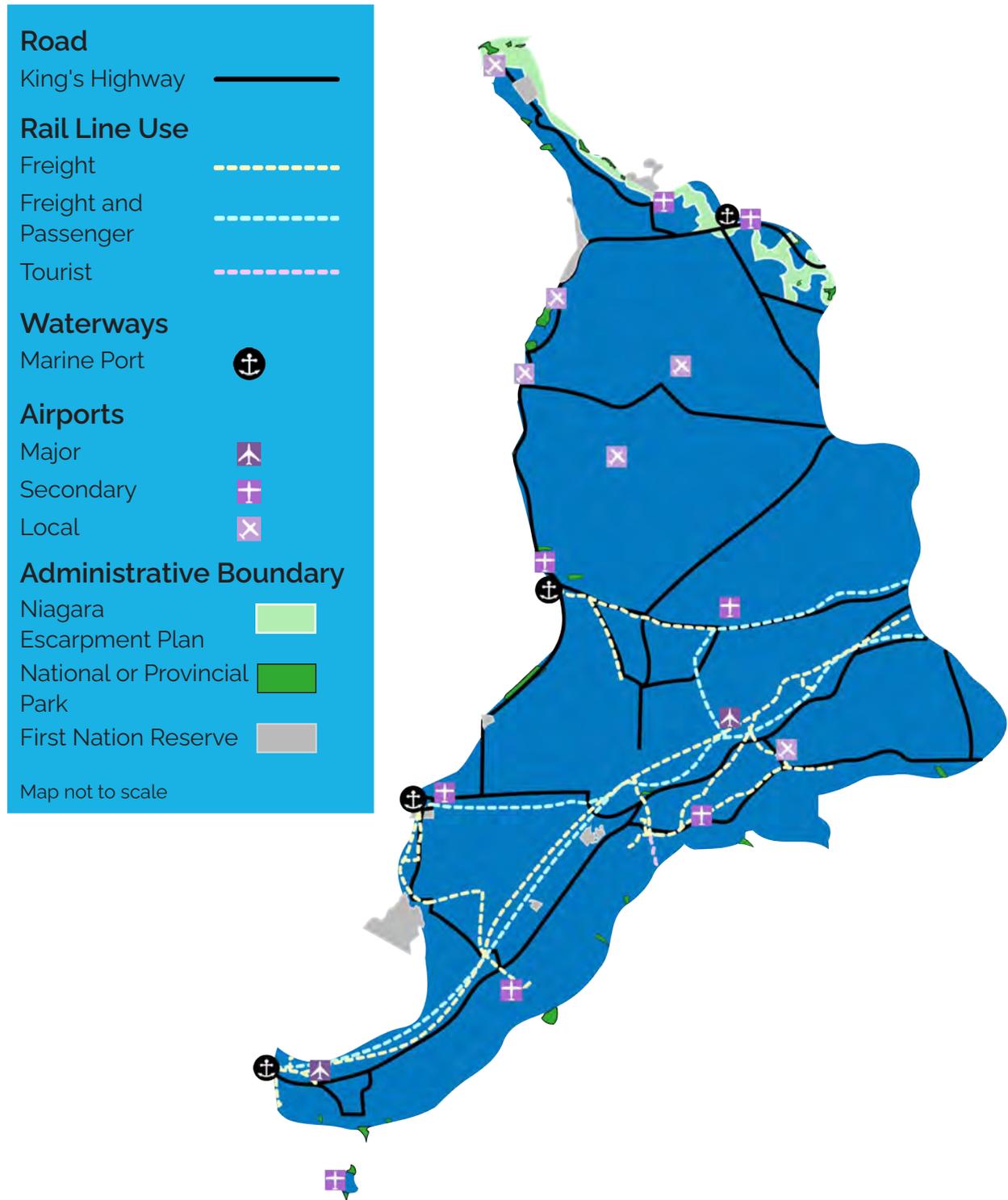
**Over 170,000 passengers**

on Ontario government ferries in 2016



**Nearly 1,800 km**  
of cycling routes

# Southwestern Ontario's Transportation Network Today



**Figure 1:** Southwestern Ontario's Transportation Network Today

# Southwestern Ontario: Challenges and Opportunities

## Why do we need a transportation plan?

This transportation plan is a roadmap that will help navigate the challenges of the region, explore opportunities and build an integrated transportation system that works for the people of southwestern Ontario.

Southwestern Ontario's transportation system is made up of local roads, roads on First Nation reserves, provincial highways, trains and buses, ferries, local airports, cycling trails and pedestrian walkways. However, there are opportunities to improve the transportation network to expand access to bus, rail and transit and connect communities across the region.

Our plan will address current challenges and explore opportunities to build a foundation for the future. It will be a living document that will evolve as a result of continuing input from partners and stakeholders to stay relevant as technology and the needs of people and businesses evolve.

## Needs and opportunities

### More intercommunity bus services

Intercommunity bus services play an important role to connect people to jobs and essential services like doctor's appointments, especially in rural

communities. People need to be able to access jobs where they are available, whether they are in the agricultural sector, financial centres, automotive plants, schools or hospitals.

Improving intercommunity bus options, particularly north-south connections where there are gaps in service, will help support the economy and make life more convenient for people in southwestern Ontario.

### More reliable passenger train service

VIA Rail is the only operator of intercity passenger rail services in the region, with two routes connecting Sarnia and Windsor to Toronto. Where rail service is available, trains on these routes travel slower and are often delayed by more than 15 minutes. This is often due to competition with freight trains and track conditions that are not designed for passenger trains.

Our plan commits to explore a range of options to improve the speed and frequency of passenger rail service, by working with freight and passenger service providers to offer more convenient service.

### More local public transit

People in cities and towns need more reliable and convenient public transit options. Many people choose to drive even when transit options are available because of infrequent or inconvenient bus schedules.



This transportation plan is a roadmap that will help navigate the challenges of the region, explore opportunities and build an integrated transportation system that works for the people of southwestern Ontario.

Over the next 20 years, improving public transit services will only become more important with a growing population and an increasing number of seniors.

### **A strong highway network**

The provincial highway network provides a vital connection to communities across the region. But even with more bus, rail and transit options, congestion along provincial highway corridors is forecasted to increase. Congestion is not only frustrating for drivers – it also impacts economic growth in the region.

Every day, over \$1.1 billion worth of goods travel on southwestern Ontario roads. These goods come from industries such as manufacturing and agriculture that rely on the highway network to connect to markets. Auto manufacturing is especially dependent on Highways 401 and 402 and major border crossings in Sarnia and Windsor.

Supporting a truly competitive business environment in southwestern Ontario requires safe and reliable highways to keep people and goods moving efficiently.

### **Reliable local roads**

Many people and businesses in rural communities rely on a network of local highways and roads as their primary way to get around. For example, agricultural businesses use local roads to move farm products and heavy equipment. Delays caused by traffic on local roads can have a negative impact on business.

The same activities that bring strong economic benefits can also lead to transportation challenges. Booming tourism interests in the region are leading to congestion on the roads, making it more challenging to get to parks and coastal areas – especially when travelling in larger RVs or hauling trailers with campers or boats. At the same time, many of the same routes are frequently used by farm equipment, cyclists, horse-drawn vehicles and others, which can result in challenges sharing the road.

### **Regional airports and ferry services**

Regional and municipal airports are economic generators and provide a critical connection to social, health, security services and the transportation network. For island communities, such as those on Pelee Island and Manitoulin Island, seasonal ferry service is often the only viable mode of travel.



Every day, over \$1.1 billion worth of goods travel on southwestern Ontario roads.



## **Vision:**

Individuals, families and businesses across southwestern Ontario have access to a safe and reliable transportation system that connects local communities, and contributes to the health, well-being and economic prosperity of the entire region.

# A Plan for Southwestern Ontario

This plan is organized around the following goals to achieve the transportation vision for southwestern Ontario:

- 1.** Getting people moving and connecting communities
- 2.** Supporting a competitive open for business environment
- 3.** Improving safety
- 4.** Providing more choice and convenience
- 5.** Preparing for the future

This plan has been developed with the input of partners and stakeholders to get people moving in southwestern Ontario. However, we know the work is not done yet. Transportation plans are living documents that require continuing input, updates and improvements to stay relevant as the needs of people and businesses evolve and as technology advances. The province will be engaging with partners on strategies for implementation and additional ways to achieve the goals set out in this plan.

Successful implementation of many actions in this plan will rely on the wide range of players – current and future – in the transportation system. Municipalities and Indigenous communities are critical partners in delivering a safe, reliable and integrated transportation network to the people of Ontario. This plan proposes a southwestern Ontario municipal and Indigenous task force on transportation integration, to better coordinate bus, rail and transit services and meet local needs.

The federal government, which regulates rail and air services, also has an important role to play. The province will work closely with federal, municipal, Indigenous, public and private sector partners from all sectors to build an integrated transportation system that addresses local priorities and achieves the goals set out in this plan.

# Key Actions in Southwestern Ontario



Figure 2: Key Actions in Southwestern Ontario

# Goal 1: Getting People Moving and Connecting Communities

People across southwestern Ontario need a passenger transportation system that works for them. Connections between communities and passenger modes – such as rail, intercommunity bus, and local transit – are key to a seamless trip.

The goal to get people moving and connect communities includes actions that will support rural residents travelling short distances to urban centres, as well as connections for longer-distance services between cities and towns. Ontario is improving access to passenger buses and trains to connect people to jobs and each other, encourage tourism and make it easier to get to a medical appointment, a grocery store or to visit family and friends.

## Actions to get people moving and connect communities:

**1.** Improve intercommunity bus service: Ontario is reviewing the intercommunity bus sector and

ways to better deliver services to make it easier for people to travel between communities.

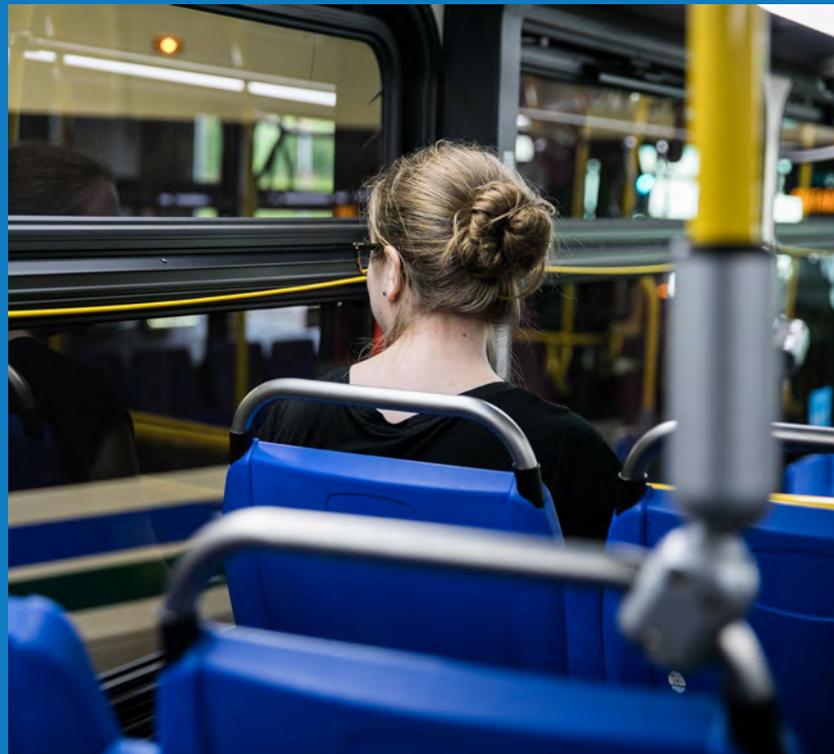
**2.** The government is supporting community transportation in municipalities that are underserved by passenger bus services. These municipalities can benefit from alternate approaches to delivering passenger transportation services within and between communities. Through the Ontario Community Transportation Grant program, 12 municipalities in southwestern Ontario are receiving \$14.8 million over five years to deliver local and intercommunity bus services. Through this program there are also three active municipal-First Nation partnerships in southwestern Ontario.

## Connecting communities with the Community Transportation Grant program

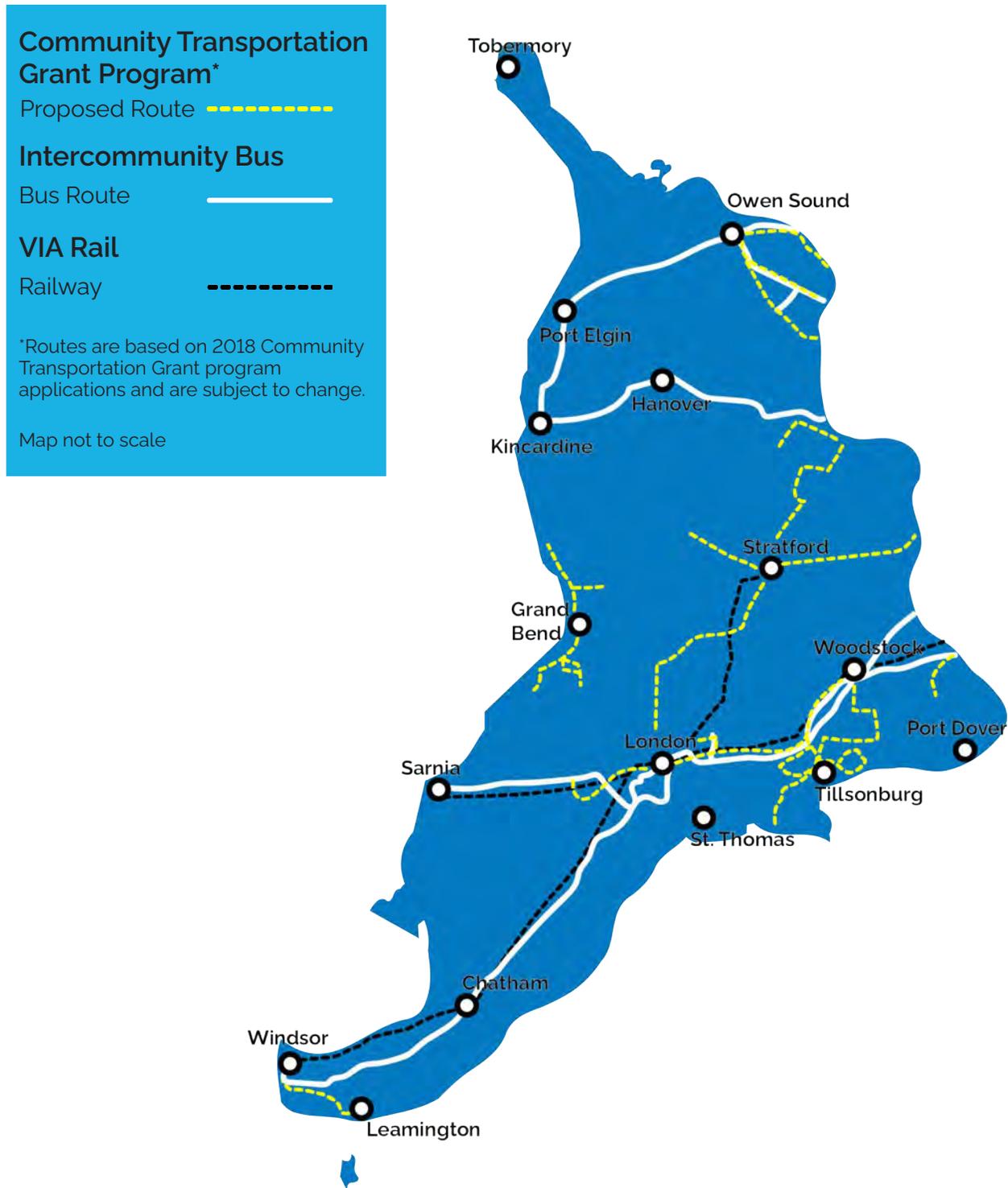
In southwestern Ontario, new routes funded by the Community Transportation Grant program, in combination with services from existing intercommunity bus carriers, will increase the number of municipalities with access to intercommunity bus service by 58 per cent.

### Ontario 2018-2019 Community Transportation Grant program recipients in Southwestern Ontario:

Chatham-Kent	Perth County
Grey County	Southgate Township
Lambton Shores	Stratford
Leamington	Strathroy-Caradoc
Middlesex County	Township
Norfolk County	Tillsonburg
Owen Sound	



# Passenger Transportation in Southwestern Ontario



**Figure 3:** Southwestern Ontario intercommunity bus and passenger rail service



**3.** Improve public transit through provincial contributions towards the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program.

As of November 2019, Infrastructure Canada has approved 10 projects in the City of London which will help increase the speed and frequency of transit within the city by adding 31 new buses, upgrading intelligent traffic signal networks to improve traffic flow, and installing 60 new bus shelters.

**4.** Provide approximately \$20 million to 21 municipalities in the region to expand and improve municipal transit systems and infrastructure in southwestern Ontario through Ontario's Dedicated Gas Tax Funds for Public Transportation Program in 2018-2019. For example, in 2018, Sarnia used approximately \$115,000 of Gas Tax funding to support the purchase of eight replacement transit vehicles to enhance customer service, accessibility and continued service for Sarnia Transit. In the same year, Stratford used approximately \$680,000 of their Gas Tax funding to support bus replacements and make improvements to their transit terminal.

**5.** Since 2018, \$31 million has been provided to southwestern Ontario municipalities through the Connecting Links program. This program helps to repair roadways and bridges to improve connections to communities or border crossings. Projects include the replacement of the Queensway East Bridge over the Lynn River in Norfolk County, full reconstruction of Berford Street from Mary Street to Division Street in South Bruce Peninsula, and reconstruction of the Ontario Street Corridor in Lambton Shores.

**6.** Continue positive discussions with freight rail companies and regional stakeholders toward

passenger rail service enhancements and the achievement of two-way, all-day GO passenger rail service between Kitchener and Toronto, which will help connect southwestern Ontario travellers with other regions.

Ontario and Metrolinx have worked together with CN Rail to increase GO train service along the Kitchener rail corridor. In January and August 2019, new trip options were introduced for customers in Kitchener, Guelph and other communities along the corridor.

Construction is also underway to build two rail tunnels under Highways 401 and 409 that will accommodate two additional tracks. This will add more service to the Kitchener Line in the future.

**7.** Explore opportunities to increase passenger rail service to southwestern Ontario, working with freight partners on track access and with VIA Rail on the potential for integrated service offerings with GO Transit. These services could increase options and convenience for passengers travelling between London and Toronto.

### **Making travel more convenient**



An integrated transportation system means that you can step off one form of passenger transportation, such as intercommunity bus, train, or local public transit, and easily transfer to another. Our plan will make it easier for people to transfer between systems without the need for multiple tickets or tokens.

Ontario is committed to working together with municipalities and service providers to coordinate schedules and fares to give people a seamless travel experience.



**8.** Identify opportunities to enhance train speeds and service by conducting a technical review of existing rail corridors in southwestern Ontario. Preliminary analysis of three railway corridors between Union Station (Toronto) and London has identified constraints and opportunities for improving passenger rail services. The province is undertaking technical analysis and will engage corridor owners as required on more detailed analysis of specific service scenarios.

**9.** Establish a task force with representation from southwestern Ontario mayors and Indigenous chiefs as a venue to discuss transportation service needs and opportunities to better integrate transportation services in the region. The task force will help make it easier for people to travel between communities and access services such as healthcare.

The task force will focus on improving connections between rail, bus, and local transit services across southwestern Ontario and ensure that our plan is informed by local needs and considerations.

**10.** Develop and implement solutions to improve timing of schedules, rules related to fares, location and contents of signs and where stops and stations are located, working with bus and rail providers. This will improve the travel experience by making it easier for people to transfer between transportation systems.

**11.** Continue to ensure Ontario's provincial ferry services connect communities. In 2019, our

government recognized the importance of the Owen Sound Transportation Company (OSTC) for local tourism and economic development by bringing its operations under the Ministry of Transportation to focus on the sustainability and streamlining of service delivery.

Our government is also conducting a review of ferry services in Ontario to explore opportunities to further consolidate and streamline the delivery of all the provincial ferry services in Ontario. Streamlining the delivery process will support the reliable delivery of ferry services as well as economic development by providing a more convenient experience for tourists, encourage local employment and create better connected communities.

**12.** Work with municipal and federal partners to support active transportation connections, such as cycling paths and trails within and between southwestern Ontario communities and connections to transit systems. For example, in 2019, London was approved under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) to construct a 250 m cycling and pedestrian underpass on Adelaide Street which will run under a Canadian Pacific Rail bridge. Our government has also nominated an active transportation project in Windsor for federal approval under ICIP to construct 3.6 km of new bike lanes and 3.48 km of sidewalk along Cabana Road West.

# Goal 2: Supporting a Competitive Open for Business Environment

A safe and reliable transportation network is essential to a healthy economy. It provides businesses with a critical connection to markets within the region, across Ontario as well as the United States.

Our goal to support a competitive business environment contains actions that will improve roads and highways so that businesses can keep goods moving. It also includes actions to reduce unnecessary regulatory burdens on the trucking industry to make life easier while ensuring drivers are safe on the roads.

## Actions to support a competitive, open for business environment:

**13.** Double the number of lanes on Highway 3 between the Town of Essex and Leamington to improve safety, reduce congestion and create additional economic opportunities for residents and businesses. As many as 17,300 vehicles travel between Essex and Leamington each day, making Highway 3 a critical link between communities in southwestern Ontario.

**14.** Carpooling and taking transit can help reduce the environmental impact of transportation. To get more people out of their cars, Ontario is exploring opportunities to provide additional commuter parking lot spaces to make it easier to carpool and connect to transit services. This includes expanding existing locations and constructing new standalone facilities, as well as exploring partnerships with nearby services, convenience and gas stations.

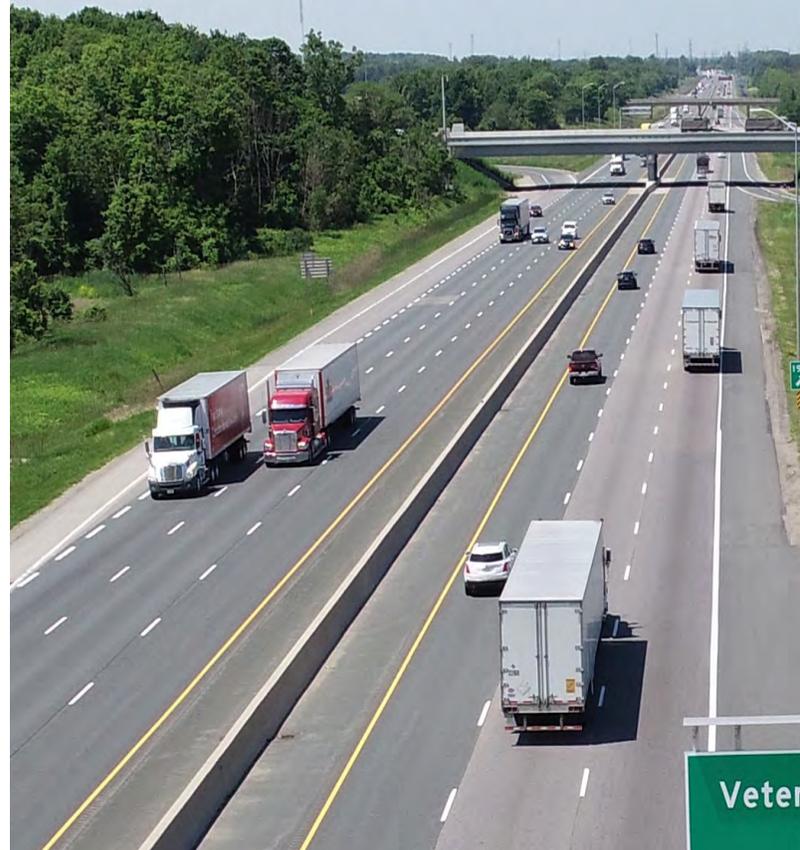
**15.** Improve connections between Ontario's southwest and markets to the east, from Halton and Peel through to Québec, by advancing design work to:

- Construct a bypass around the Town of Morriston and make upgrades to the south end of Highway 6 in Guelph

- Widen Highway 401 from Regional Road 24 (Hespeler Road) easterly to Townline Road in Cambridge
- Replace Grand River bridges on Highway 401 in Kitchener
- Construct a new Highway 7 between Kitchener and Guelph

**16.** Continue technical modelling and analysis to determine future highway needs in southwestern Ontario.

**17.** Consider the movement and safety risks associated with large, slow-moving farm equipment and transportation of agricultural products to market in road and rail design, such as shoulder, curb and traffic circle design, speed limits and signage.





Ontario's economic competitiveness is highly dependent on the trucking industry.

## Supporting the trucking industry

Ontario's economic competitiveness is highly dependent on the trucking industry and that is why the government will:

**18.** Simplify and modernize regulations through the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act that will save professional truck drivers and companies time and money without compromising road safety.

**19.** Update Long-Combination Vehicle (LCV) Program conditions to reduce congestion due to truck traffic, cut red tape and increase efficiencies for businesses. A typical LCV is made up of a tractor pulling two full-length semitrailers. LCVs are an efficient and safe way to move light and bulky goods.

**20.** In cooperation with municipalities, Ontario will review the rules around reduced load periods for the agriculture, agri-business and trucking industry to help cut red tape and support businesses, while protecting road infrastructure. Reduced load periods are limits on the weight of vehicles to protect roads from damage during the spring thaw when they are most vulnerable.

**21.** Reduce wait times at the border by building a new overpass structure in Windsor over Ojibway Parkway to connect Highway 401

to the future new International Crossing Canada Customs inspection plaza. Once completed in 2024, the new Gordie Howe International Bridge will connect to the Rt. Honourable Herb Gray Parkway and will provide an alternative way to cross the Canada-US border to reduce time spent in traffic for travellers.

**22.** Explore opportunities to address the shortage of truck parking for commercial vehicle operators. Commercial drivers need rest stops or areas designed to park large vehicles safely. The province is looking at options to expand truck parking, such as the Cambridge North and South ONroutes, or repurposing the former Truck Inspection Station on Highway 402 near Sarnia as a Truck Rest Area.



## Goal 3: Improving Safety

Ontario is committed to ensuring that the province's roads and highways remain among the safest in North America. Improving safety means taking action that will keep people safe no matter where or how they are travelling. Safety is important in all modes of transportation, whether making a short journey to cross a street, waiting for a bus, or driving along the province's network of roads.

### Actions to improve safety:

**23.** Actively advancing planning and design work for Highway 401 from London to Tilbury will help make it safer by widening the highway to six lanes and installing a concrete median barrier.

This will add capacity and improve safety by building a concrete median barrier which will

substantially reduce the likelihood of cross median collisions. Ontario is working to have the first contract ready for advertising/procurement in 2020.

**24.** Make winter driving safer by working in partnership with private landowners to plant more and better snow hedges in areas that experience severe drifting, both within government property and on private property. Snow hedges are living fences of trees and shrubs that effectively reduce drifting while providing environmental benefits.

**25.** Explore opportunities to work with road safety partners to add more stops on provincial highways to rest or send a text, outside of the existing ONroute network of rest stop locations.

### Track My Plow program gives drivers access to real-time updates

The Track My Plow program allows drivers to track the location of snowplows and salt trucks on provincial highways in Ontario. This program improves access to information on road conditions and closures to make winter driving safer.



**26.** Improve visibility to make roads safer at night by installing Light-Emitting Diode (LED) lighting at over 50 locations and two ONroute locations. Ontario is committed to working with municipalities and other partners to improve safety with better lighting in other locations such as road/rail crossings, commuter parking lots and rest areas.

**27.** Explore options to improve uniformity and quality in pavement markings and traffic control devices to be more visible, durable and better enable automation. Over the last several years the province has been testing different pavement marking products and methods on provincial highways to improve visibility in dark and wet conditions. This includes textured markings, markings in rumble strips (grooves in pavement on the shoulder, adjacent to the lanes), inlaid or recessed markings and wet reflective materials. A trial using recessed markings and different paint materials is currently underway on Highway 401, west of Cambridge.

**28.** When collisions happen on our roadways, it is important to support our first responders to clear the way as quickly as possible. We will work with towing, insurance industries and law enforcement to clear highways faster after a collision, with a focus on heavy commercial vehicles. Quickly clearing our highways after a collision means you will spend less time sitting in traffic and businesses can keep goods moving.

**29.** Update the provincial Emergency Detour Route (EDR) guidelines to provide more specific guidance for establishing EDRs. The updated guidelines will better define roles and responsibilities and clarify communication protocols to make sure there are safe, clearly marked alternate routes for traffic in an emergency.

**30.** It has been reported that up to 60 per cent of all human trafficking in Canada involves using the 400-series highways. Ontario will work in partnership with the private sector, including the province's ONroute operator and the commercial trucking industry, to raise awareness of human trafficking. This includes posting awareness materials about the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline at key locations such as truck inspection stations, rest areas, and highway service centres in Ontario. Awareness activities would be complemented by the exploration of safety enhancements in these key locations, such as improved parking lot lighting and emergency communications infrastructure.

# Goal 4: Providing More Choice and Convenience

This plan will help provide more choice and make life more convenient for people in southwestern Ontario by identifying opportunities to use emerging technologies to improve our every day lives. There is enormous potential for data from vehicles, in-road sensors and more to be used to help people make informed travel decisions.

## Actions to provide more choice and convenience:

**31.** Increase availability of near real-time information, to keep travellers aware of current highway conditions, including collisions, road and weather conditions, snow plow locations and construction activities, in order to make informed travel decisions.

Ontario is looking to make travel more convenient by:

- Improving near real-time updates on traffic and weather conditions on Ontario 511 by testing emerging technologies like remote sensing and machine learning, and partnering with data providers, such as in-car navigation systems and platforms like Waze, which makes crowd-sourced app information available through a free data sharing program.

- Establishing partnerships with municipalities and emergency service agencies to explore traffic data integration and pilot project opportunities.

- Exploring other partnerships with academia and private sector industry to improve mobility as a service.

**32.** Electronic signage provides drivers with essential, real-time information such as traffic updates, border wait times and emergency detour routes. Ontario will identify new and better locations to install electronic message signs along provincial highways to improve access to real-time information for drivers.

**33.** Support the integration of transportation and technology, such as smart phone applications, that integrates fare payment, improves comprehensive trip planning as well as partnerships for events and accommodations that encourages the use of transit.



## Providing up to date border wait time information

Ontario is providing people and businesses crossing the border with more up to date information by installing a new system of ground mounted, overhead and portable message signs on Highway 401 approaching Windsor and Highway 402 approaching Sarnia. The signs will provide up to date border wait times for both cars and trucks crossing at the Ambassador Bridge and Detroit-Windsor Tunnel in Windsor and the Blue Water Bridge in Sarnia.



**34.** Investigate and identify priority actions to integrate different modes – rail, intercommunity bus, public transit, ridesharing, scooters, bikes – to make it easier for people in southwestern Ontario to get around and provide more options to get there. For example, this could include first and last mile solutions to help connect an entire journey, or co-location of modes (for example, bus and train) to facilitate easier transfers.

**35.** Modernize the definition of e-bikes to improve road safety and continue a pilot that would let municipalities choose to allow people to safely use kick-style e-scooters on roads. These services will provide a new way for people to get around their communities and connect to inter and intra community transit.

**36.** Provide more options for people to live and work near transit, build ridership and reduce reliance on cars by facilitating transit-oriented development at transit stations, where possible. This approach can also yield partnerships with the private sector, to contribute non-tax dollars to accelerate and expand the delivery of transit infrastructure.

### **Expanding broadband and cellular coverage in southwestern Ontario**

The province is ensuring that people have access to the broadband service they need through Ontario's Broadband and Cellular Action Plan and Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) partnership. Cellular and broadband coverage helps make travelling safer by allowing people to access real-time updates, such as recent road closures and weather incidents.

# Goal 5: Preparing for the Future

The province needs a transportation network that is resilient and embraces innovation and technological change. This plan will prepare the region for the arrival of innovative technology like connected and automated vehicles that could transform the way people live, work and move in the province. It also explores opportunities to protect the environment for future generations and partner with the private sector to deliver services faster, at a lower cost to taxpayers.

## Actions to help prepare for the future:

**37.** Connected and automated vehicles (CV/AVs) use sensors, cameras and other technologies to operate without the need for regular driver input. These vehicles may also use technology to connect with other vehicles, transportation infrastructure and mobile phones.

Ontario is actively preparing for this new technology in a number of key areas, such as traffic management and road and highway design. We are also supporting CV/AV research, development, testing and piloting in Ontario. For example, Ontario is:

- Supporting the development and commercialization of CV/AV technology through the Autonomous Vehicle Innovation Network (AVIN), delivered by the Ontario Centres of Excellence
- Updating the Automated Vehicle Pilot program to allow for more testing of emerging technologies on Ontario roads

CV/AVs are an innovation in the auto sector, with more than 200 companies in the province contributing to a global market expected to be worth \$1.3 trillion (US) by 2035. If deployed effectively, CV/AVs may be able to:

- Improve safety by eliminating human error, which is estimated to account for over 95 per cent of collisions in Ontario
- Reduce emissions when a vehicle is equipped to use clean or alternative fuels, such as electric and hydrogen powertrains
- Enhance accessibility by addressing mobility challenges, such as seniors who do not have driver's licences



## Testing connected and automated vehicle technology in Stratford

Stratford is home to one of Canada's first connected and automated vehicle demonstration zones. This means companies can test, validate and showcase their innovative products, such as personal voice assistants and weather tracking sensors, in a real on-road environment. This demonstration zone is part of Ontario's Autonomous Vehicle Innovation Network that supports the development and commercialization of innovative CV/AV technologies in Ontario.

**38.** Improve safety and traffic operations by exploring the establishment of an innovation corridor on Highway 401 from London to Tilbury. The innovation corridor would provide an on-highway environment to pilot and trial the use of traffic management products, such as pavement markings.

**39.** Review locations for alternative fueling stations, including electric and hydrogen, for public use that will support potential private sector commercial partnerships and competitiveness. This is an important step for Ontario to provide world-class, seamless and future-ready transportation infrastructure and reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with transportation.

## Preparing for the impacts of a changing climate on transportation infrastructure

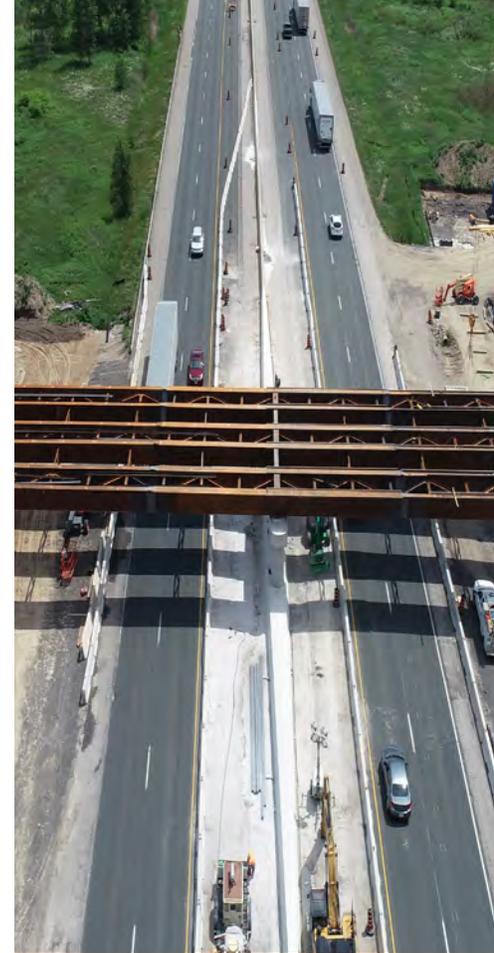
Working with the University of Waterloo and other technical experts, Ontario has updated the policies, tools and reference data used in designing highway drainage infrastructure to consider the potential for more extreme weather. This will help prepare the highway network for the effects of climate change and maintain the resiliency of the provincial highway network into the future.

**40.** Work with key partners to ensure our clean electricity system is ready to accommodate electric and innovative transportation.

**41.** Propose changes to integrate the vehicle safety and emissions inspections program for transport trucks into a single inspection. We are creating a one-stop approach – one test, one result – for truckers to complete these inspections. Completing both safety and emissions tests at the same time will save truckers time and money so they can focus on keeping goods moving across Ontario, while maintaining the necessary protections for our environment and improving safety.

**42.** Climate change is leading to more frequent weather events and flooding that can damage our roads. We are adopting climate change mitigation and the impacts of a changing climate into decision-making processes to ensure that our highways and infrastructure are resilient to flooding and other damage caused by extreme weather.

**43.** Undertake a southwestern Ontario airport activity and infrastructure survey to assess the role of airports in supporting economic development, public service delivery and to ensure the sustainability of local airports. Municipal airports deliver vital public services including air ambulance and policing, as well as moving people and goods.



# Next Steps

Our plan provides a path forward to get people moving across southwestern Ontario. It includes improvements that will connect communities, improve access to jobs and support a competitive business environment in the region.

We are getting people moving and connecting the region, with improvements such as new intercommunity bus and transit services in 12 municipalities in southwestern Ontario through the Ontario Community Transportation Grant program. We are supporting a competitive open for business environment with actions including exploring opportunities to expand truck parking. We are improving safety by widening and adding a concrete barrier on Highway 401 between London and Tilbury. And we are providing more choice and preparing for the future, including working to provide better, near real-time information on travel conditions to help make it easier for people to get around.

We know there's more work to do. We will work with Indigenous, municipal, federal and other public and private sector partners to deliver on the actions in this plan. Establishing a task force is one key way that the province will work together with municipalities and Indigenous communities to improve transit throughout the region. The task force will help address challenges and provide better, more coordinated transit options for the people of southwestern Ontario. Our plan is a living document that will require continuing input, updates and improvements as technology advances and to build on the progress we have made since 2018.

Ontario is committed to developing regional plans that will help build a better, more seamless transportation system across the province. Connecting the Southwest marks the beginning of comprehensive regional transportation planning for the province. We will be developing regional plans for northern Ontario, eastern Ontario and the Greater Golden Horseshoe to address the unique needs of these regions. Together, these plans will form an integrated, long-term transportation plan for all of Ontario that helps people to travel more efficiently, get to work faster, connect to critical services and spend more time with family and friends.

Ministry of Transportation  
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