

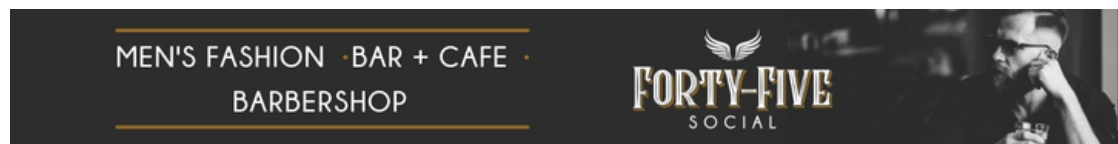
Need for 40-foot busses and their cost, questioned

By **Dan Gray** - October 28, 2021 @ 3:14 pm



Cities all over the world are recovering from COVID-19, a process that sometimes forces difficult questions to be asked.

For some time now, Sault Transit has been slowly working to replace their fleet of old buses and thereby bring the system up to date.



On Monday, October 25th, Councillor Matt Shoemaker voiced concerns about the ever-rising costs of replacing the 40-ft buses that navigate the city.

"The price per unit is listed here [at] \$592,307, plus HST. And this is this was priced through the kind of group purchasing system we entered into with Metrolinx. And so, I'm wondering is the \$592,307 cheaper than when we priced these things on our own last year? Outside of the Metrolinx group?" asked Shoemaker.

Director of Community Services, Brent Lamming, was able to give some insight to Shoemaker.

"Yes, it is a bit higher. The purchase price per unit now is 592,000. Prior, back in 2020, the units were 559,000, including the cameras. The reason for the change is a big COVID impact, especially on rising costs for inputs, namely steel." said Lamming. "The group-

buying purchase group here, it represents 52 municipalities and fellow municipalities like North Bay, Timiskaming, Thunder Bay and Sudbury. So, if we didn't use Metrolinx, we would anticipate this cost would have been substantially higher than what the deal [is] that we have for us."

One of the disadvantages of being part of the Metrolinx TPI, which Sault Ste. Marie has agreed to do until 2025, is you can't "bid around" once a cost is quoted.

"All bids are optional for participation once you become a member. The one caveat is that you cannot agree to bid and then take that price to leverage another company for a cheaper price outside the program," stated the agenda report on January 11th of this year.

Councillor Paul Christian questioned the size of the replacements.

"I assume those are the larger version of a transit bus, correct? And, I guess if they are, are they absolutely necessary? (Have we) given thought to smaller buses? I mean, anecdotally, and I'm certainly not a manager of transit, but just looking at capacity on these buses and looking occasionally at occupancy, they don't often look full. So, I'm just wondering, [are] there any [options such as] looking at smaller buses to help reduce costs?"

Lamming said there were two 35-ft buses on the books over the next two years.

"So, we are using that avenue to decrease the size for certain situations. But we do have, you know, in heavier routes for the 40 foot buses."

SaultOnline and ONNTV have obtained the ridership numbers from the Sault Transit and will be presenting them in a follow-up piece in the near future.

Dan Gray

A native of Centre Wellington, Ontario, I have worked as a freelance journalist all over the province of Ontario. Most recently I ran a local news page in my hometown of Fergus, Ontario. I look forward to bringing my experience covering breaking news, municipal matters and general interest stories to the team at Superior Media and communities we serve.



