

Week 9 Q&A – Sault Transit Improvements

By **Dan Gray** - May 15, 2022 @ 8:26 am



Our site is going into week nine of our question and answer feature in which SaultOnline poses a question from the community to both the Mayor and Councillors. Further, the list of respondents now includes anyone who has announced their intention to run for a seat in the fall municipal election.

As always the question is put forward early in the week and a deadline of Friday at noon is given for responses to be submitted.

This week's question –

Some locations across the province are renewing their transit system with smaller buses and better planning of routes etc.

With buses seemingly never running full and with the price of diesel, gas and everything else going up. What are your thoughts on buying smaller buses, possibly electric or hybrid and streamlining the delivery of services to reduce the cost to the taxpayer?

Mayoral Candidates –

Ozzie Grandinetti – We should be going with a mix of regular size buses and smaller buses or larger passenger vans like the Ford Transit or Mercedes Sprinter to be able to

provide the best economical service for the users and the City. As a contractor, I spend a lot of my time driving around the City, from what I see, most of our buses are driving around empty, damaging our roads. I do think we need to keep regular sized buses running in the core area of the City where the rider numbers are higher especially during peak hours. Smaller buses or passenger vans could allow us to offer an improved service for the passengers from outskirts of the City where there are less people utilizing the services. We should also be looking at a better service delivery model for passengers using the services on outskirts of town such as reducing their travel time and dropping them off closer to their homes rather than at the nearest bus stop.

A north south route would offer better services for our downtown residents needing to go to the hospital or access the services on the north end of the City. I would also like to do some research into what the Town of Innisfil (pop. 40,000) did with the ride sharing service they put in place a few years back. I have heard that they have had success with this. Patrons have access to on-demand, affordable, and safe transportation and are enjoying the flexibility of having transportation anytime, day or night.

Matthew Shoemaker –

Yes, we need to look at smaller buses where we can use them. Many of our new buses are 10% smaller than our old ones. However, if there is the option of downsizing them further (provided they can still fulfill the service) then we should do that. That said, the last 2 years of ridership are not the stats on which our decisions can be made because COVID emptied out public transit, so we will need a couple years of “normal” operations to make the best decisions for the transit system going forward.

We already have a plan to electrify our bus fleet, and I expect you’ll see the first electric bus in the City next year. This isn’t the only type of municipal equipment we should be electrifying. We are already buying electric zambonis (which will mean no more carbon monoxide from the zamboni exhaust indoors). I also recently brought a motion to electrify our small-engine equipment like lawn mowers, weed eaters, chain saws, and more. We should be electrifying every piece of equipment that we can because of the cost of fuel and the environmental benefits.

We did do a comprehensive route study, which was approved in August 2018, and it significantly reduced our transit costs, which allowed us to bring back Sunday service. We had cut Sunday service earlier in the 2014-2018 term to save costs, but it was obvious that it left a lot of people without good options for getting to work on Sundays. We should look at doing that once every 8-10 years, and I would support doing another one close to the end of this decade.

Donna Hilsinger – No response submitted.

Ward 1 –

Paul Christian – No response submitted.

Sandra Hollingsworth – No response submitted.

Ward 2 –

Luke Dufour – No response submitted

Lisa Vezeau-Allen – No response submitted.

Ward 3 –

Donna Hilsinger – (See Mayoral Category)

Matthew Shoemaker (See Mayoral Category)

Ward 4 –

Marchy Bruni – No response submitted.

Rick Niro – No response submitted.

Ward 5 –

Matt Scott –

I would love for our transit to have much smaller buses and run more efficiently. During my time on council I've been supportive of buying smaller buses (which I believe we could get even smaller than those) as well as pilot projects around more efficient operation. Ideally we should be collecting as much data as possible on locations, time of day/week/month/year, weather, and every other possible piece of data we can to analyze it for any ridership trends then base our operations on that. Making our transit agile and able to pivot when trends change is key to efficiency.

In absence of that, on demand transit is something I would like to see expanded upon. Why run buses on long routes if there is nobody there to collect or drop off? It's bad for business and it's bad for the environment.

Corey Gardi – No response submitted.

Mayor's Office –

No Response Submitted.

Here is a running bi-weekly scoreboard on who is answering and who isn't.

Do you have a question you want asked of your councillors, mayor and candidates in the weeks leading up to the election?

Let SaultOnline know and our staff will do their best to get answers for not just you, but the community as a whole.

To reduce confusion going into the Provincial election, this will be the last Weekly Q&A until after the provincial elections.

Thank-you for choosing SaultOnline/ONNTV as your source of news in Sault Ste. Marie and the surrounding area.

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.



