



# Go Your Way

Burlington's  
Transportation Master Plan



Discussion Paper 1 | June 2014

## Current State of Transportation in Burlington

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# Discussion Paper 1: Current State of Transportation in Burlington

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The City of Burlington is developing a Transportation Master Plan “Go Your Way” that is intended to map out a transportation future that will help the city grow in place by providing multiple travel options that are convenient and safe. The purpose of this Current State paper is to:

- report the current state of transportation in Burlington;
- present challenges and possible alternatives for the City’s transportation future;
- provide the planning and policy context for the Transportation Master Plan; and
- foster dialogue in the community about “Go Your Way”.



## Transportation Today

To understand where the City is today in terms of transportation, it is important to reflect how the City got to this point. Burlington, like most urban centres in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) and North America, has been largely built around the automobile. Burlington's road network has performed the role of moving automobiles very well; however, this has resulted in mostly suburban sprawl.

The travel trends in the Transportation Tomorrow Survey, provided in Figure 1, show car travel (number of trips) increasing at a faster rate than population growth over the last five year period.

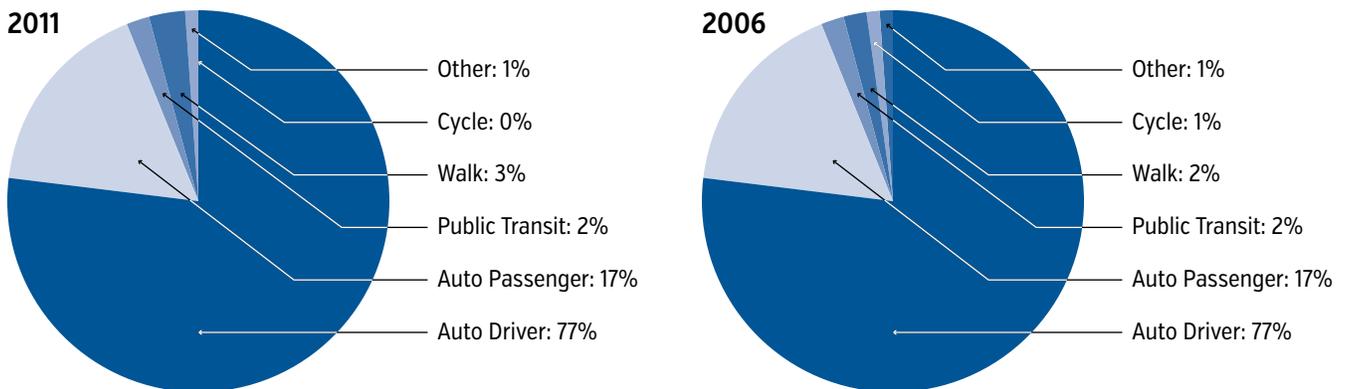
**Figure 1** Population Increase Compared to Car Travel Increase

	2006	2011
<b>Population</b> Conclusion: 7% increase in population	164,415	175,779
<b>Car Travel</b> Conclusion: 10% increase in trips made by vehicles	79,134 P.M. Peak Period [3:30 to 6:30 p.m.]	87,184 P.M. Peak Period [3:30 to 6:30 p.m.]

Source: Transportation Tomorrow Survey, 2011 and 2006.

During the same period, the percentage of trips by car versus the percentage of trips by all other means has remained at 94% with only 6% of trips are by transit, cycling or walking, as depicted in Figure 2.

**Figure 2** Travel Modes for Trips Originating in Burlington in the P.M. Peak Period



Source: Transportation Tomorrow Survey, 2011 and 2006.

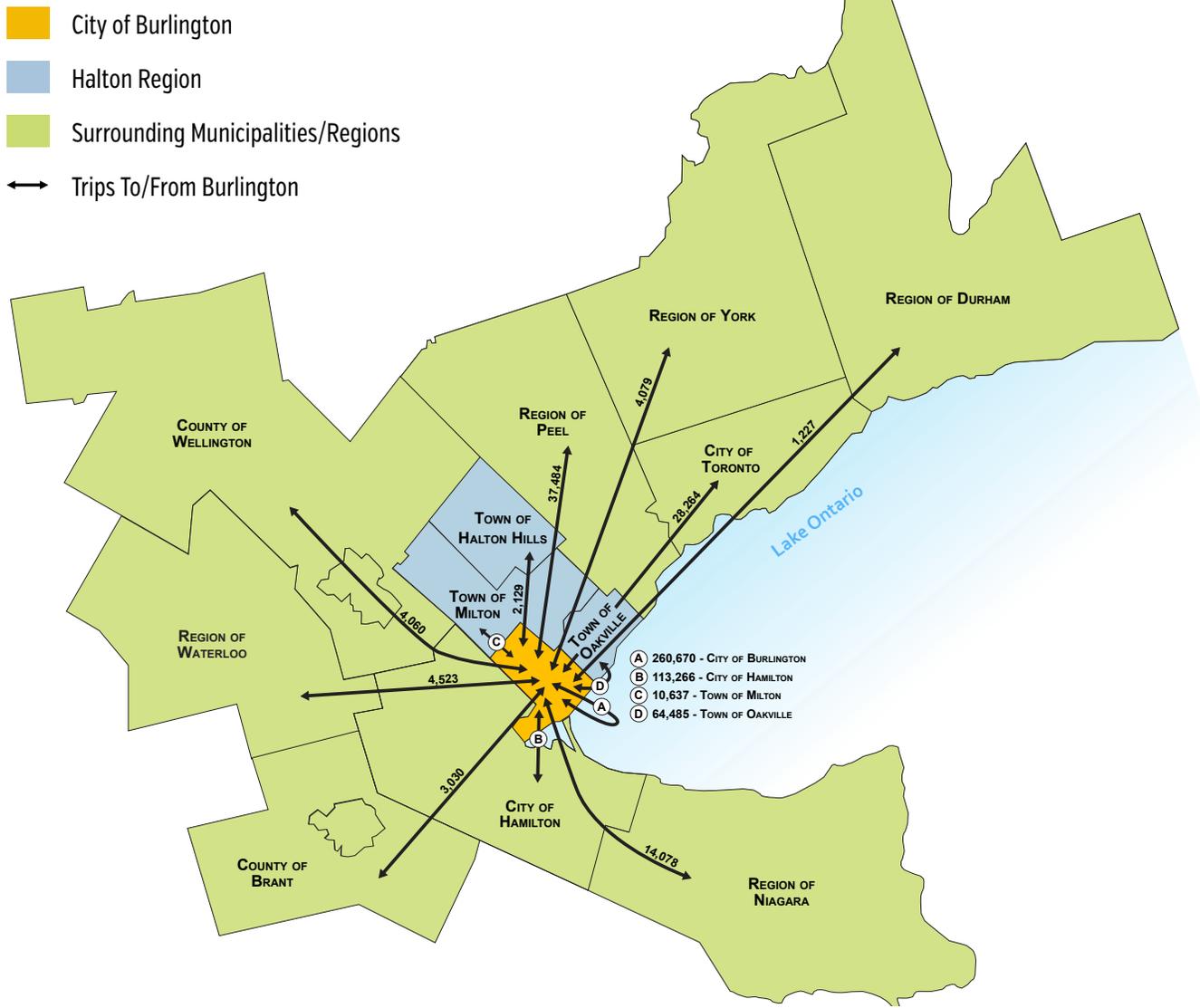


Of trips taken during a typical weekday, that start or end in Burlington, the greatest number [260,670] remain within the City, as shown in Figure 3. This represents 48% of all trips that start or end in Burlington during this period. The City of Hamilton [21%] and the Town of Oakville [12%] are the next two most prevalent origin or destination of trips followed by Peel Region [7%] and the City of Toronto [5%].

The data clearly shows that Burlington residents have not changed their travel behaviours in the last decade with the car as the preferred mode. The TMP will examine the consequences of continuing this trend and what that could mean for the City in the long term.

**Figure 3** Current Weekday Travel Patterns in Burlington

Source: Transportation Tomorrow Survey, 2011.



## Challenges for the Transportation Master Plan

There are a number of factors that will challenge the City in providing an adequate transportation system if we continue to cater solely to the automobile.

- Population and employment is forecast to continue to grow.
- There is little available land to expand the road network in Burlington.
- Short-cutting traffic is expected to increase as the entire GTHA grows.
- The tax base is limited and will have to shoulder a greater burden to accommodate future growth in transportation infrastructure.

### Population Growth and Demographic Changes

The City of Burlington is home to 175,779 people, as counted in the 2011 Census which represents an almost 7% increase from 2006. Halton Region; is growing at a rate that is twice as fast as Burlington and is expected to grow by 50% from 2011 to 2031. Based on the Region's Best Planning Estimates, growth in Burlington is forecast to slow and increase by only 6% during the same time period.

While growing in population, the proportion of seniors in Burlington is also expected to increase. The median age is higher in Burlington than in the Halton Region as a whole as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**

**Population and Median Age Statistics**

Category	Burlington			Halton Region		
	2031	2011	2006	2031	2011	2006
<b>Population</b>	186,169	175,779	164,415	752,537	501,669	439,206
<b>Median Age</b>		41.8			39.3	

Sources: Statistics Canada (2006 and 2011 data), Halton Region Transportation Master Plan (2031 data).

An aging population presents unique challenges for the City to provide reliable transportation options especially for seniors. These options will enable them to remain in their home, if they choose, for as long as possible and maintain their independence.

### Full Build Out

The City is approaching build out. While most residential units historically have been built on Greenfield sites, the majority of units in the future will likely be constructed in existing developed areas through reuse and intensification.

The existing road network has also, for the most part, been built out. Any further full scale expansion will require extensive property acquisition with very prohibitive cost implications and will create roadways that make walking and cycling less desirable. The City has made a conscious decision to maintain the existing urban boundary and to not permit expansion north of Highway 407 / Dundas Street or into other sensitive areas in southwest Burlington north of Highway 403.

### **Traffic Congestion Increasing**

With continued population and employment growth in the GTHA, traffic congestion in Burlington will increase. Because of its unique location, between major population centres in Toronto and Hamilton, Burlington experiences a considerable number of trips that have no origin or destination in the City. Some of these trips shortcut on city roads when a driver perceives congestion and believes travel time will be shorter through the city rather than on Provincial highways or Regional roads. Shortcutting has the potential to add a considerable amount of traffic to the City's road network.

### **Limited Financial Resources**

The City will be developing detailed business cases for funding future transportation and transit infrastructure. If more road infrastructure is added to the network, even more investment is needed to operate and maintain these roads. As reported in the Burlington Story, over the past decade, the City's revenue has increased by 84% while the expenditures have increased by 96%.

Because population and employment growth are slowing and Greenfield areas are at a minimum, there will be increasingly less revenue in the City's funds from development charges to pay for any expansion to the transportation network.

## **Possible Solutions**

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### **Build More Roads**

Widening existing roads or building new ones, in most circumstances, will encroach on private property, impact mature trees and green space or compromise the existing public realm [e.g. sidewalks, boulevards].

Many large and mid-sized North American cities have recognized that increasing road capacity for single occupancy vehicles [SOVs] is not sustainable because it perpetuates the habitual and increased use of the automobile and any new road capacity is quickly consumed. A more sustainable transportation strategy is to move more people per kilometre by walking, cycling, via transit or these modes in combination with high occupancy vehicles.

The role of the TMP is to recommend strategic and cost effective improvements to the network that will support a more sustainable transportation strategy moving forward.

## **Expand the Urban Boundary**

The rural lands and the Niagara Escarpment in the northern portion of the City are features that make Burlington unique. Burlington City Councils, past and present, have taken a strong stance against development and other road infrastructure (eg. NGTA Highway) that has the potential to threaten this unique character.

The TMP will focus transportation solutions within the existing urban fabric and by doing so, help maintain the integrity of the rural lands.

## **Stop Growth**

Historically, growth has paid for the expansion to the transportation network as well as community centres, parks, schools and other City services. With no growth, all expansion to the City's infrastructure will fall directly on the tax payer.

If there are no sources of growth revenue (Development Charges) the City will face undesirable choices such as cutting services, maintaining existing infrastructure at a lower level, or raising residential and business taxes. Growth is needed to maintain and enhance the high quality of life in Burlington.

Strategies and policies that will be included in the TMP will provide mobility solutions that enable the City to accommodate additional growth through the intensification of existing land uses.

## **Invest in Alternative Modes of Transportation**

The City's Official Plan sets goals for transit usage that are in line with Halton Region's TMP. The Official Plan states:

The City's transportation system and land use development are intended to achieve the following minimum transit modal shares when "mature-state" urban development is reached:

- 15% of all trips within Burlington by transit;
- 30% of all eastbound trips leaving the City by transit; and
- 10% of all westbound trips leaving the City by transit.

## **Accommodate the Non-Drivers**

Planning for a car-dependant culture excludes several groups of people, including:

- The young, who are not old enough to drive;
- The elderly, who may no longer be able or willing to drive;
- The disabled, who may find it difficult or impossible to drive;
- The economically challenged, who may not be able to afford to drive; and
- The voluntary non-driver, who chooses not to drive.

Viable transportation solutions outside of the car are needed to accommodate these groups. Viable alternatives help to increase the number of people in the voluntary non-driver category.

### **Discourage Pass Through Traffic**

There is a concern that a lot of people are driving through Burlington, as a means to arrive at their destination outside of the City. The TMP must balance the transportation system to maintain local access, provide for the movement of goods and services but discourage short cutting traffic that is better suited for Regional roads or Provincial highways. An important policy of the TMP will be for the City to build and maintain “complete streets”, which are designed for all modes of transportation and all types of users. This may result in lower posted speed limits, road diets with narrower lane widths and travel restrictions. These measures will serve all modes of local traffic well while at the same time, discouraging shortcutting car or through truck traffic.

### **Seize Opportunities**

The City must maintain its current population while growing strategically. The City also must maintain and encourage existing businesses, while also attracting new businesses. Connections within the City using a variety of modes of travel are important for residents and businesses alike. Mobility Hubs offer an opportunity to increase the density for residential, commercial and employment use around the existing Burlington GO stations while not demanding an inordinate amount of automobile capacity for our roadways to operate satisfactorily. Residents and goods movement must be able to move between destinations safely and in a reasonable amount of time.

The TMP will explore ways to increase transportation connectivity in the road and transit network by reducing or eliminating the missing links in the system. While the QEW is a crucial transportation corridor, it also dissects the City and acts as a barrier between the north and south. Additional crossings of the QEW will be explored to increase connectivity, shorten travel distances and provide alternative routes through the City.

There are numerous locations in the City where transportation infrastructure and land use are beginning to work well together. Downtown Burlington includes a wide mix of land uses, including residential, commercial retail, offices and institutions like the Burlington Art Gallery and Joseph Brant Hospital, plus public spaces like the waterfront. These are knit together through a connected network of multi-modal transportation options including bus routes, bike lanes, sidewalks and roads. There are many things to do and many ways to get to the downtown.

Outside of the downtown, communities like the Orchard and Alton are residential areas that provide convenient pedestrian and bike connections to commercial retail areas. These communities promote a more active lifestyle through a mix of land uses and transportation options.

The role of the TMP is to provide policies and options to build upon these successes to improve mobility options, provide greater multi-modal transportation connectivity, help support opportunities for further development and develop places where people want to be. Doing so will help maintain and grow the City’s residential and employment base and will set the groundwork for continued prosperity in the future.

## Planning and Policy Context

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### City of Burlington

The vision for transportation in Burlington, as stated in the Official Plan is:

*“To provide an integrated, diverse transportation system for all residents and businesses that is safe, convenient, affordable, efficient and energy-conserving while minimizing environmental impacts. The primary role of the system is to provide for the movement of people and goods safely and efficiently within the city and adjoining areas. The transportation system is the link between land uses in the city and, as such, is an essential part of Burlington’s future urban and rural structure. Emphasis will be placed on providing infrastructure to support alternative modes of transportation including transit, cycling and walking.”*

The TMP will align with the City’s Official Plan Review to ensure the City’s transportation network supports the City’s planned land use objectives. The Official Plan Review recognizes the City is reaching a state of build out meaning, the undeveloped land at the edges of the City will no longer be available for new development and growth so the City must “grow in place” within its urban limits.

To grow in a sustainable way, the City must make strategic decisions about how and where it grows today, and in the future. With that goal in mind, as part of the Official Plan Review, the City of Burlington is undertaking a Mobility Hub Opportunities and Constraints Study. A mobility hub is an area planned where multiple forms of transportation converge and where a mix of land uses at higher intensities is planned.

The Burlington Intensification Study (2006) forecasts that 60% of the residential units created in Burlington between 2006 and 2031 will be through intensification of existing infill sites. Employment growth would consume the remaining employment lands and could also be considered as infill development. The projects, plans and policies in the TMP will be designed to complement and help facilitate intensification of land uses.

Burlington’s Cycling Master Plan (approved in 2009) guides the expansion of the city’s network of on-road bike lanes and off-road multi-use pathways throughout Burlington. The city is also developing a Community Trails Strategy, which will further supplement transportation options throughout the City.

### Region of Halton

The Halton Region Transportation Master Plan (RTMP), completed in 2011, identifies Regional improvements within the City of Burlington, which include the widening of Dundas Street, Brant Street and Appleby Line as transit corridors as well as the widening of Guelph Line, Burloak Drive and Upper Middle Road. The RTMP incorporates Regional Official Plan Amendment 38, where the Region stated a goal of a 20% of trips by transit in the p.m. peak period (3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.) by the year 2031.

From the RTMP, the Halton Region Active Transportation Plan strives to help promote an integrated, sustainable,

accessible, affordable and efficient multi-modal transportation network where Active Transportation will be a viable alternative to strengthen linkages between communities and municipalities. The plan will guide the Region to meet the mode share target for active transportation of 5 % of all PM peak hour trips by 2031, from less than 2% in 2011. The proposed Cycling and Walking networks will link the City of Burlington to its neighbouring municipalities.

## **Province of Ontario**

The Places to Grow Act, has developed Provincial Plans that complement each other and are mutually supportive. They set the Provincial framework for municipalities to achieve land use and transportation goals. They are the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the Greenbelt Plan and The Big Move.

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe promotes mixed-use communities that support public transit, walking and cycling as viable transportation options. The Greenbelt Plan protects agricultural and ecological lands, and builds upon the ecological protection provided by the Niagara Escarpment Plan and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan. The Big Move strives to create a long-term strategic plan for an integrated, multi-modal and regional transportation system. Its goal is to have over 6 million GTHA residents [81%] live within two kilometres of rapid transit by 2031.

## **The Transportation Dialogue Begins**

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The Burlington TMP is intended to map out a transportation future that will help the City grow in place by providing multiple travel options that are convenient and safe. It will seek to enhance connectivity within the City by embracing the concept of “complete streets” and providing policies and plans to improve mobility. The TMP will support intensification of land uses by providing a blueprint for strategic transportation investment in these areas.

As outlined in this paper, without growth and the influx of additional tax revenue from new residents and new or expanded businesses, the only significant local funding mechanism will be higher taxes. Without change in travel behaviour, the only transportation future will be gridlock. The time to shift to a more sustainable, multi-modal future is now.

The TMP will be developed through a collaborative process. Participation and feedback from residents and businesses are valued and included as part of the solution.



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