



LAWSON

**Ottawa
deserves better.**

ALEX LAWSON FOR MAYOR

Fix the basics.

The Lawson plan for OC Transpo.

01 / OVERVIEW

Fix the leaks first.

Ottawa's transit system is not short on money. It is short on management.

Buses are scheduled to run trips they were never set up to deliver on time. A one-seat ride from Orleans to Barrhaven has become three transfers. Honest riders are paying \$138 a month and watching half the bus board for free. The train was sold to us as the spine of the system, then opened before it met the operating standard it was supposed to clear. Operator assaults rise. Cancellation reports do not match what Ottawa actually sees on the road.

This is not a money problem. Another \$200 million dropped on OC Transpo tomorrow would not end up where we need it. The system is not ready for more money yet. Fix the leaks first.

This document is the Lawson plan for OC Transpo. Twelve commitments, organized around the six problems Ottawa riders experience every day. Each commitment is costed where the city's own data allows it and verified through public-record sources. Where the numbers depend on data the agency has not yet released, those numbers are being requested through Access to Information and will be published before they are used in any paid communication.

Fix the leaks first. The system is not ready for more money yet.

02 / THE TRAIN PROBLEM

When the train fails, riders are stranded.

For thirty years before LRT, the Transitway carried Ottawa. Express buses on Routes 95, 96, and 97 ran like a subway above ground. When Confederation Line opened in 2019, all three were retired. The Transitway corridor was paved over for the train.

In return, every cross-town rider was given a forced transfer at Blair, Hurdman, or Tunney's Pasture. When LRT runs on time at full frequency, that architecture works. When LRT is down or operating at half capacity, every transfer becomes a failure point.

As mayor, Lawson will give Ottawa a backup.

COMMITMENT 01

Bring back rush-hour bus rapid transit.

A temporary express bus network, station-to-station to downtown, during morning and afternoon peaks. No milk runs. Get people from where they are, to where they need to be.

COMMITMENT 02

Hold the train to its own standard.

The express bus network will continue to operate until LRT meets the operating reliability standard it was supposed to clear before launch. A passing grade will be given after 20 consecutive days without issue.

During testing, the train will continue to be open to passengers as a choice, not the only option. We are not abandoning the train. We are giving the train room to actually be made to work.

COMMITMENT 03

No new corridor required.

The express network runs on existing roads, using buses Ottawa already owns or has on order. It is a deployment change, not a capital project.

03 / THE SCHEDULE PROBLEM

A bus running an empty route at midnight still shows up late.

Ottawa's buses do not just run late because of traffic. They run late because the schedule itself was wrong before the bus left the yard. A bus running an empty route in the middle of the night, with no passengers boarding and no traffic to fight, still arrives late at its final stop. That isn't a traffic problem. It's a schedule problem.

Interlining was intended to maximize the effectiveness of our fleet but has had the opposite impact. We end up with multiple buses dead-heading across the city during rush hour instead of picking up a route from the last stop of their previous one.

On top of that, the wrong vehicle frequently ends up on the wrong route. A 60-foot articulated bus assigned to a 600-series school route at 7:45 a.m. gets locked into the rest of its day, often on local routes with fewer riders.

COMMITMENT 01

Reset the run times.

Rebuild scheduled run times on the worst-performing routes using real operating data and frontline operator input. Pilot first; measure outcomes; scale. Standardize and enforce consistent break and recovery practices so operators are not asked to make up lost time at the expense of safety.

COMMITMENT 02

Audit the dispatch cascade.

Match vehicles to the routes that need them. Stop pulling articulated buses onto routes that do not require them. End the pattern where one late trip pulls down the rest of the day's schedule.

COMMITMENT 03

Move school transportation back to yellow school buses.

Work with student transportation authorities to revert as many 600-series school routes as possible to yellow school buses. Safer for kids (crossing arms, exterior signals, dedicated safety training). Frees Ottawa's articulated bus fleet for commuters who need it at peak.

COMMITMENT 04

Fleet matched to routes.

No more double-deckers. They clear only a handful of routes, and their boarding times make on-time performance impossible on busier corridors. Articulated buses are prioritized on the routes that need

them. Articulated fleet replacement accelerated; the existing fleet has aged past its design life and we are almost out of runway.

04 / THE ROUTE PROBLEM

Trips that used to be one ride are now three transfers.

When the LRT-fed network was designed, the goal was to push every rider through a transfer point. The cost was the riders who used to have a direct connection from their neighbourhood to where they were going. The Orleans-to-Barrhaven trip is the textbook case. Before LRT, 55 minutes on Route 95, one bus, no transfer. After LRT, multiple transfers and significantly longer travel time.

Outside the urban core, the problem is different. Some low-density corridors are being served by 60-foot buses on a fixed schedule with low ridership. These are service hours that could be redeployed to high-demand routes that are short. Some communities have no service at all and have asked, repeatedly, for an on-demand option that recognizes the way smaller places actually move.

COMMITMENT 01

Rebuild routes around rider time.

A combined route and timetable review, delivered within twelve months. Door-to-door rider travel time is the design metric with input from community associations. Where direct service was removed and ridership collapsed, it gets restored. Worst-performing routes piloted first.

COMMITMENT 02

OC Transpo operated on-demand for rural Ottawa.

The City of Ottawa already piloted on-demand service in Blackburn Hamlet in 2024 and the agency declared it a success. Ten minibuses were purchased to expand the model. North Grenville's NGtransit has been running an on-demand model in Kemptville since January 2024, seven days a week, with a fixed-route connection to Limebank LRT station added in September 2025. As mayor, Lawson will expand OC-Transpo-operated on-demand service into rural Ottawa using vehicles similar to those already in our possession, on the model that already works. Run in-house by OC Transpo, not contracted to private providers.

COMMITMENT 03

Para Transpo as a core component, not a side service.

Para Transpo riders will be given the same on-time and service-delivery standards as every other rider in Ottawa. We need a named senior staff member to be accountable for Para inside a reorganized OC Transpo structure. Para riders were named in the CBC's 2024 reporting on the on-demand pilot as the constituency the agency forgot. Under Mayor Lawson, that ends.

Fairness for your fare: you should pay for your bus trip, not somebody else's.

The fare-collection system has been quietly abandoned. Buses dispatch from the yard with broken Presto readers, jammed fare boxes, and jammed transfer printers, marked with yellow "out of order" stickers, and run their entire shift unable to collect a fare. Fare inspectors work a Monday-to-Friday schedule, which means there is effectively no fare enforcement on evenings or weekends across the whole network.

The cruelest part of the system as it stands today is what happens to the honest rider when the equipment fails. A rider with loaded Presto pass and a willingness to pay boards a bus with a broken reader, tries to tap, gets no beep, sits down. Two stops later, a fare inspector at a major station issues that rider a \$260 fine for not paying the fare. The rider paid for the pass. The agency broke the equipment. The agency fined the rider.

Behind the equipment is a Presto problem the agency cannot fix on its own. Presto is owned and operated by Metrolinx. The next-generation Presto contract is being procured now. Ottawa has a window.

COMMITMENT 01

Modular, redundant fare equipment.

A single broken Presto reader should not pull a bus from service, and should not allow a bus to run a full shift without collecting fares either. Investigating modular component options that can be swapped at the garage and for backup taps so a single failure does not stop fare collection. The vendor base exists. Cubic, Genfare, and Init all sell modular components in use at peer agencies.

COMMITMENT 02

No bus dispatched into revenue service with broken fare equipment.

A daily morning sign-off by garage supervisors. The current pattern of buses running full shifts with yellow "out of order" stickers ends. Fares get collected because the equipment works.

COMMITMENT 03

Restore enforcement riders can predict.

Fare inspectors deployed in proportion to ridership across all days of the week, including evenings and weekends. Operators inform. Inspectors and Special Constables enforce.

COMMITMENT 04

Never fine an honest rider for the agency's broken equipment.

When a Presto reader is out of service, the operator issues a printed record of attempted payment, on the spot. The rider carries it. It is a defence against any subsequent fare-evasion fine. Where the agency's own records show the equipment was out of service at the time and place of boarding, any fine issued is automatically invalid and refundable.

COMMITMENT 05

Measurable data.

Only a small portion of the fleet currently has equipment to accurately measure how many riders are actually using the system. Because of this, our fare evasion numbers are just guesses. This equipment

will be expanded to every bus so that we know exactly how much more every honest rider is paying to cover the theft.

06 / THE SAFETY PROBLEM

Your bus should not be the most dangerous place in your day.

Ottawa is the only major Canadian city of its size without a published, enforceable rider code of conduct. Toronto adopted its transit by-law decades ago. Calgary updated its by-law in October 2024, adding explicit offences for verbal harassment, threats, intimidation, fare-pass tampering, visible weapons, and loitering by riders not actually using the system. Edmonton's transit by-law prohibits open use of controlled substances and conduct that interferes with other riders' safety or comfort.

Ottawa has none of this. OC Transpo's rider guidance is a set of "travel tips" on the website. The result is a free-for-all that pushes paying riders away and leaves operators to manage incidents they have no policy to fall back on. Open hard-drug use on buses is documented. Operator assaults are documented. Special Constable response times are unworkable.

As mayor, Lawson will give Ottawa rules.

COMMITMENT 01

Adopt a Rider Code of Conduct as a transit by-law.

Modelled on Toronto's TTC By-Law No. 1, Calgary's Bylaw 4M81, and Edmonton's Bylaw 8353. Behavioural, not categorical. Conduct, not condition. Riders are not asked to leave because of who they are. Riders are asked to leave because of what they are doing.

COMMITMENT 02

Special Constable response targets, published quarterly.

Operator-initiated incident response times reported by category. Ride-bans imposed and appealed reported in aggregate. Appeal outcomes reported. An independent reviewer, not OC Transpo management, decides ride-ban appeals.

COMMITMENT 03

Crisis response routed to services, not the curb.

Operators and Special Constables carry contact information for the city's mental health and addictions outreach teams. When a rider in crisis is on the system, the response is to connect them to the right service, not to leave them at the next stop.

COMMITMENT 04

Cameras on every bus, to protect riders and operators.

Functional, recording, audio-and-video surveillance on every OC Transpo bus, including articulated buses, double-deckers, the minibus fleet, and Para Transpo vehicles. A vehicle does not enter revenue service with broken or missing surveillance. Cameras protect the operator who is assaulted and has no other record, protect the rider who needs the trip documented, and give management trend data so

deployment matches the actual pattern. Privacy and access protocols published and reviewed by the city's privacy commissioner.

COMMITMENT 05

Ottawa isn't the same as it used to be.

Bus drivers might see more of it than any of us. We need dedicated mental health professionals in house, to help operators with the unique stressors they deal with on a day-to-day basis. We are asking too much, and offering too little support. Choice will always be important, but so is having help from someone who understands you.

07 / THE ACCOUNTABILITY PROBLEM

A volunteer with a laptop reports cancellations more honestly than the agency.

A small website built by one Ottawa software developer, in his spare time, has been tracking OC Transpo cancellations in real time more accurately than the agency does itself. The agency's published service-delivered rate counts a bus trip as delivered the moment the vehicle leaves the yard. A bus that breaks down five stops into a 40-stop route is a delivered trip in the city's reports. A trip cancelled because the previous trip ran late and used up its slack is a delivered trip in the city's reports. The published number satisfies the public's right to know on paper, and almost nowhere else.

The reason the agency reports the way it does is not malice. It is a management structure that has stopped being held accountable. OC Transpo committed publicly in 2016 to cutting 500 to 600 positions after Confederation Line opened. Fewer operators is not going to work until the train does. Below the management layer, the agency is short on the people it cannot run without: mechanics, garage supervisors, operational supervisors, and Special Constables, with the agency effectively running a taxpayer-funded training academy for other policing services because pay parity has never been closed.

COMMITMENT 01

Fix what counts as a delivered trip.

Redefine "service delivered" as a trip that completes its scheduled route within a reasonable on-time window. Daily reporting by ward, by route, by cause category, in real time on the city website. Section-level dispatch records included in the monthly Transit Commission package. The published number matches what riders actually see on the road.

COMMITMENT 02

A 90-day management accountability review.

An independent review of OC Transpo's management structure, completed within 90 days of taking office, benchmarked against pre-LRT levels and reporting to the Transit Commission chair. Positions that exist to manage other managers, rather than to deliver service, are eliminated.

Workforce: attraction, retention, and an Algonquin pipeline.

Special Constable pay parity with police services, actioned in the next collective agreement cycle. Mechanic and garage supervisor shifts restructured to compete with the private sector. A bus-specific heavy mechanic stream at Algonquin College, including electric bus content, paired with a city-funded tuition-for-service program. Modelled on how the Canadian Forces fund post-secondary training in exchange for a service commitment.

08 / WHAT WE WON'T DO

Three things off the table.

We will not pave the tracks. The city has committed billions to Confederation Line. The train has to work, and the job of the mayor is to make it work. The rush-hour express bus network described above is a bridge, not a replacement. It is wound down on a public schedule once LRT meets the operating standard it should have met before launch.

We will not blame the workers. Every commitment in this plan is built on the principle that OC Transpo's problems are management's to fix, not the drivers', mechanics', or constables'. The honest workforce at OC Transpo is who this plan is designed to back up.

We will not pretend there is a silver bullet. Service did not collapse overnight and it will not be restored overnight. What we are committing to is visible, measurable improvement, starting in the first year, with quarterly public reporting against every metric in this document.

09 / WHY ALEX

I know what things cost.

I have spent my career running crews, managing projects, and delivering work inside a budget and on a schedule. If I had twenty-seven people sitting idle on one job site while another job site was short seven, I would fix it before lunch. If I had equipment that broke as often as the fare boxes on OC Transpo's buses, I would replace the equipment, not blame the people running it. If the timetable on my job was set up so the crew was already losing time before they put their boots on, I would reset the timetable.

Transit in this city will not be fixed by pouring more money into the same broken structure. It will be fixed by a mayor who looks at the agency the way a builder looks at a stalled project. What is actually wrong. Who is actually responsible. What does it cost to do it right.

That is what this plan does.

We've got a lot of work to do.

Ottawa deserves better.

Every figure here is sourced.

ROUTES 95, 96, AND 97

Three express routes that ran on the Ottawa Transitway and were retired when Confederation Line opened in 2019. Route 95 was the Transitway's busiest and oldest route, with peak headways of four minutes by 1987. The post-LRT network connects all routes to Blair, Hurdman, or Tunney's Pasture stations rather than carrying riders directly through downtown.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transitway_\(Ottawa\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transitway_(Ottawa))

OC TRANSPON-DEMAND PILOT, BLACKBURN HAMLET

Pilot launched February 11, 2024. OC Transpo told council in June 2024 the pilot was a success based on increased ridership and customer and staff feedback. The agency purchased ten minibuses to expand the on-demand model.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/oc-transpo-on-demand-pilot-project-1.7105568>

NGTRANSIT, NORTH GRENVILLE AND KEMPTVILLE

On-demand transit launched January 15, 2024. Small purpose-built vehicles (six to eight seats with two wheelchair spaces). Booking via the Blaise app, by phone, or online. Seven days a week. September 15, 2025 expansion added a fixed-route connection from North Grenville to Limebank LRT station.

<https://www.northgrenville.ca/services-and-payments/municipal-services/transportation>

PARA TRANSPON AND THE ON-DEMAND PILOT

CBC reporting in 2024 named Para Transpo riders as the constituency left out of OC Transpo's on-demand pilot expansion.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/oc-transpo-says-on-demand-transit-is-a-success-these-para-transpo-riders-feel-left-out-1.7236437>

OTTAWA STUDENT TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (OSTA)

OSTA manages all home-to-school transportation for the OCDSB and OCSB. Eligibility for grades 9 to 12 transportation is 3.2 km or more from the home school. High school students with public transit access receive a PRESTO card with a school board pass paid for by OSTA. OC Transpo operates 600-series school routes plus special school trips on regular routes.

<http://www.ottawaschoolbus.ca/school-bus-routes/oc-transpo-public-transit-information/>

TTC BY-LAW NO. 1

Toronto Transit Commission rider conduct by-law. Provides for fines under the Provincial Offences Act for behaviour interfering with the ordinary enjoyment of riders, conduct objectionable to other passengers, hand luggage inconveniencing others, and identity disguise.

<https://www.ttc.ca/by-law-no-1>

CALGARY TRANSIT BYLAW 4M81 AMENDMENTS

Calgary City Council approved transit bylaw amendments in October 2024 adding offences for verbal harassment, threats, and intimidation directed at operators, riders, and staff; tampering with or counterfeiting fare passes; carrying a visible weapon; and loitering or non-destination use of the system. Penalties from \$250 to \$500.

<https://newsroom.calgary.ca/city-council-approves-transit-bylaw-amendments-that-address-safety-concerns/>



CITY OF EDMONTON BYLAW 8353, CONDUCT OF TRANSIT PASSENGERS

Edmonton's transit conduct bylaw prohibits spitting on transit property, behaviour that interferes with the safety or comfort of others, visible use of controlled substances, and remaining on transit property for purposes other than using transit.

<https://www.edmonton.ca/sites/default/files/public-files/assets/Bylaws/C8353.pdf>

INTERLINING AND DEADHEAD IN TRANSIT OPERATIONS

Interlining is the industry practice of running one bus across multiple routes through a shift, often via a deadhead (a vehicle moving without passengers) between routes. Designed to reduce fleet size while maintaining service hours. When run times are inaccurate, late running on one route can compound into cancellations on the next route in the same vehicle's day.

<https://www.tripspark.com/blog/save-money-and-get-better-otp-with-bus-interlining/>

METROLINX NEXT-GENERATION PRESTO PROCUREMENT

Metrolinx is procuring vendors for the next-generation Presto fare collection system; the current vendor contract expires at the end of 2025. The Toronto Transit Commission, in 2023, replaced more than 5,500 fare-payment devices on its bus and streetcar fleet, designed to support open payment.

<https://www.masstransitmag.com/technology/fare-collection/press-release/21285749/toronto-transit-commission-ttc-ttc-and-presto-begin-upgrading-bus-and-streetcar-fare-card-readers>

Authorized by the official agent of the Alex Lawson campaign.