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Free weekend service begins on Shelburne transit

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Local public transit service users will find their trips much cheaper this summer.

The Grey Transit Route (GTR) has announced that riders travelling with the public transportation service on Saturdays or Sundays throughout the summer will not be required to pay a fare. The fare-free transit started on May 20 and runs until Sept. 3.

?We're excited to be able to offer fare free weekends this summer,? said Stephanie Stewart, community transportation manager. ?With so many summer events, festivals, and activities in our communities, this provides a great opportunity for our residents to explore in their own backyard.?

Speaking with the Free Press, Stewart said they made the decision to have free weekend transit service for a number of reasons, including investing in younger riders, encouraging economic growth by supporting local businesses, providing access to employment, and promoting public transit over single vehicle use for trips.

?We are hoping that by offering the fare free on weekends this summer that we will see an increase in ridership,? said Stewart. ?By reducing the cost for families hopefully that will encourage a bit more movement and people to try out the new opportunities within Shelburne.?

Without the free fare, the cost per ride is $5 for adults, $4.50 for seniors (55 years and older), and free for children under 5.

The introduction of the fare-free weekend service over the summer comes shortly after it was announced that weekend in-town transit would be expanding in the Town of Shelburne.

As of the end of April, Shelburne has an in-town transit service route that runs on weekends (Saturday and Sunday) from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., for a total of 10 runs each day. The route consists of 14 service stop locations throughout the town that see buses on rotation every 30 minutes. With the expansion, riders no longer have to pre-book and pre-pay for the service, but payment is cash only.

?When we start a new system, it takes a little bit of time to gain new riders' attention and get people more comfortable and familiar with it. So far, we haven't seen a ton of ridership on the weekend service,? said Stewart. ?Now that there are different employment opportunities spread out within Shelburne, we do see that people are using the system to get from one end of Shelburne to the other to access those services.?

The transit service in Shelburne was initially launched in 2020 as a weekday service funded by a grant received by Grey County and Southgate Township from the provincial government. The funding was used to implement service from Dundalk to Orangeville, also known as Route 2.

According to the Grey Transit Route, in its first year of operation, from September 2020 to August 2021, the service saw a total of 1184 riders use Route 2, and ridership increased to 4,746 people in the next year.

So far this year, the number of passengers using Route 2 from Dundalk to Orangeville has been 4,810.

Stewart said the route between Dundalk and Orangeville, passing through Shelburne, is the most popular route with the Grey Transit service.

Alongside the free fare weekend service, Grey Transit Route is also adding service to Sauble Beach through their Route 5 service.

The free weekend public transportation will run until Sept. 3.

For further information on the transit service in Shelburne, including bus stop location, visit the Town of Shelburne website, or for route service information on the entire Grey Transit Route (GTR), visit www.grey.ca.