



# **HSR Fare Assist**

Presented to Accessibility Committee for  
Persons with Disabilities.

November 14, 2023

# Key Highlights of the Fare Assist Program



**30% discount on current single-ride PRESTO fares for the whole family** with eligibility based on total household income regardless of age or ability.

Hamiltonians who live at or below the Low-Income Measure can apply.



# Current Programs

- **Affordable Transit Pass program**
  - offered to low-income customers, and OW and ODSP recipients who are employed
  - provides a 50% discount off the adult monthly pass, for those aged 18-64

# Current Programs



- **Temporary Transit Fare Special Program** (also known as the Voluntary Pay Program)
  - available only on HSR Conventional service
  - allows customers who use a personal mobility device, including wheelchairs, scooters, and walkers, or are a Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) cardholder the option to voluntarily pay a fare



# Low Income Measure Levels

- Family size 1 – Income \$27,352
- Family size 2 – Income \$38,682
- Family size 3 – Income \$47,375
- Family size 4 – Income \$54,704
- Family size 5 – Income \$61,161
- Family size 6 – Income \$66,998
- Family size 7 – Income \$72,367
- Family size 8 – Income \$77,363
- Family size 9 – Income \$82,056
- Family size 10 – Income \$86,495

# Customers



Based on the 2021 census data, 88,380 people in Hamilton live at or below the Low-Income Measure:

- 19,140 children (ages 0-17)
- 55,690 adults (ages 18 – 64)
- 13,550 seniors (65+)

# Benefits



Fare Assist offers several benefits over current programs:

- The program applies consistently to customers of both conventional (HSR) and specialized (DARTS) service.
- **"Pay as you go"**, load funds as-needed.
- The discount applies to **the whole family**, including a spouse and children ages 13 to 17.
- HSR's loyalty program applies, and customers would receive free fare after the weekly cap of paid trips is reached.

# Impact



- With this wide-reaching program, it is estimated that 8,956 will be served based on known modal split
- Representing 3.1 million rides or 14% of total ridership
- Pilot is being funded by the provincial gas tax reserve at a rate that is sustainable for the pilot period.
- The usage is based on staff's best estimate; therefore, we may need to add limits to the program or conversely advertise and educate more.
- Designed to be sustainable





# Consultation Activities

- Direct mail outs to Accessible Transportation Services Clients
- Targeted outreach to Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program
- Transit Staff
- Booth at Transit (re)Design – May 11, 2023



# Consultation Activities

- Accessibility Committee for Persons with Disabilities
- Canadian National Institute for the Blind
- Public Consultation – Engage Hamilton
  - 1,183 surveys submitted
  - 1,113 surveys completed
    - 697 respondents less than Low Income Measure
    - 124 respondents greater than Low Income Measure
    - 96 respondents unsure of income level
  - 184 Community Partners



# Consultation Activities

- Survey respondents identified as:
- Female: 64%
- Indigenous: 8%
- Visible Minority: 21%
- Disability: 14%



# Application Process

- Application will be available online or paper form.
- Submitted to Healthy & Safe Communities for processing – 800 applications per month can be completed.
- A letter will be emailed or mailed, depending on preference, advising how to access the discount directly through PRESTO – in person help will be available if needed.
- Each application will be assessed based on the individual's situation.
- Annual application required.

# PRESTO



- PRESTO cards can be purchased at any of these locations
- HSR ticket office at 36 Hunter St. GO Station, City Hall or Municipal Service Centres in Dundas, Ancaster, or Stoney Creek. You can also visit any Shopper's Drug Mart or Fortinos location in Hamilton.
- The cost to purchase the card is \$4

# PRESTO



- PRESTO has varying load options:
  - Auto load ensures you never run out of funds
  - App allows for instant loads
  - In person at all of the locations listed
- Use the same PRESTO card used on DARTS on HSR



# PRESTO

- There is a two-hour transfer window available with every fare payment
- Single fares rates as of September 1, 2024
  - Adult \$2.70 - if approved for fare assist \$1.89
  - Youth and Senior \$2.25 – if approved for fare assist \$1.58
- Support person policy remains in effect per AODA Transportation Standard



# Other Fare Policies

- Children 0-5 travel for free
- Children 6-12 free with a PRESTO card
- Golden Age for Hamiltonians over 80
- Senior Annual Pass \$415.00 – 71% off the Adult monthly pass
- Senior Monthly Pass \$41.50 – 65% off the Adult monthly pass
- University/College Transit Pass –78% discount off the Adult monthly pass





# Community Supports

- Currently there are over 100 social agencies that purchase tickets to distribute to their clients



# Communications

- Develop an extensive communication program to inform the community and support the application process.
- Communicate to those in receipt of the Affordable Transit Pass.
- Develop tools to support Bus Operators.



# Follow-up

All aspects of this pilot will be tracked to determine success.

- Report to PW Committee no later than March 2025 that includes ridership, costs and effectiveness
- Final report to the 2026 budget process with recommendations on moving forward based on the data collected



**Thank You**