Minute No. 452
Minutes – Council – July 17, 2025

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Public Works – July 3, 2025

Item No. 1 Effect of Reduced North Garage Replacement Project Scope on the Winnipeg Transit Master Plan

COUNCIL DECISION:

Council concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works and adopted the following:

1. That this report be received as information.

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Public Works – July 3, 2025

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Lukes,
That the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works be adopted by consent.

Carried

Councillor Wyatt was absent from the vote on the above motion.

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On July 8, 2025, the Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works and submitted the matter to Council.

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On July 3, 2025, the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service and submitted the matter to the Executive Policy Committee and Council.

Chris Scott, President & Business Agent, ATU Local 1505, submitted a communication in opposition to the matter.

COUNCIL DECISION:

On January 30, 2025, Council concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works and adopted the following:

1. That an extension of time of 150 days be granted for the Winnipeg Public Service to report back on the implication of the reduction in project scope for the North Garage Replacement Project has for the recently approved Winnipeg Transit Master Plan.

2. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Public Works – July 3, 2025

DECISION MAKING HISTORY (continued):

COUNCIL DECISION (continued):

On September 26, 2024, Council concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Public Work sand adopted the following:

1. That Option 3 to reduce the scope of the current project to match the existing approved budget of $200.066 million, as outlined in the report, be approved.

2. That the Public Service be directed to report back to the Standing Policy Committee on Finance in January, 2025, to present a revised plan for the North Garage Replacement.

3. That the Public Service be directed to continue consultations with the Provincial and Federal Governments with regards to ICIP funding and principles to ensure future cost overruns are managed effectively.

4. That the Public Service be directed to report back to Council in January, 2025, on the implication the reduction in project scope has for the recently approved Winnipeg Transit Master Plan.

5. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to fulfill the intent of the foregoing.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Title: Effect of Reduced North Garage Replacement Project Scope on the Winnipeg Transit Master Plan

Critical Path: Standing Policy Committee on Public Works

AUTHORIZATION

Author	Department Head	CFO	CAO
B. Radstrom	G. Ewankiw	T. Graham	S. Armbruster, Interim CAO

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Winnipeg Transit Master Plan (WTMP) was approved by Council in April 2021. It outlines a vision for transit services and infrastructure in Winnipeg for the next 25 years.

A major part of the WTMP is the $538.89 million infrastructure plan. This plan was approved for application to the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program – Public Transit Infrastructure Stream (ICIP-PTIS).

The North Garage facility on Main Street needs replacement for several reasons:

- The building is in poor condition.
- Its size and design do not meet current standards.
- It was made for older vehicles, so it can't fit articulated buses, bikes, or newer buses with air conditioners on the roof.

The building cannot be upgraded for zero-emission buses. While refurbishment could improve its condition, it would not solve other issues. A replacement plan was included in the WTMP.

The initial cost estimate for the North Garage Replacement project, now called Oak Point Garage (OPG), was $200.066 million in 2019 dollars. The updated Class 3 estimate is $305 million in 2025 dollars ($236.5 million in 2019 dollars). Inflation and delays in funding approvals from senior levels of government increased costs. Council directed that the project be scaled back to fit within the approved $200.066 million budget, which will result in a smaller overall scope.

The smaller scope for the garage will cut bus storage and maintenance capacity. The WTMP shows that adding more articulated buses to Winnipeg Transit’s fleet can increase ridership. This can happen without needing more operators or additional buses. However, the current budget limits the garage's size. This restricts the growth of the articulated bus fleet and the overall fleet.

With the approved budget for OPG, Winnipeg Transit functional capacity for articulated buses is 127. This is much lower than the 150-200 articulated buses that are needed.

Pausing the purchase of zero-emission bus provisions will make the switch to these buses more expensive.

With the reduced scope of OPG, Winnipeg Transit may need to request significant capital funding within five years (soon after 2030) for either expanding Oak Point Garage or retrofitting Fort Rouge Garage.

The biggest risk to the WTMP from the smaller scope of OPG is the potential for pass-ups on Primary Transit Network lines. This would happen due to a lack of sufficient 60-foot articulated buses in the fleet.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That this report be received as information.

REASON FOR THE REPORT

At its September 12, 2024, meeting, the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works directed the Public Service to report back to Council in January, 2025, on the implication the reduction in project scope has for the recently approved Winnipeg Transit Master Plan.

At its January 30, 2025 meeting, Council granted an extension of time of 150 days for the Public Service to report back on the implications of the reduction in project scope for the North Garage Replacement Project on the recently approved Winnipeg Transit Master Plan.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with the recommendations of this report.

HISTORY/DISCUSSION

In 2018, the Public Service began the process of developing the Winnipeg Transit Master Plan (WTMP), as a combination of two projects: a Strategic Service Plan and a Rapid Transit Master Plan. The WTMP was developed in alignment with the City's overall development plan, OurWinnipeg 2045 and the Climate Action Plan.

On April 29, 2021, Council approved the Winnipeg Transit Master Plan (WTMP). The WTMP laid out a vision for transit service and infrastructure in Winnipeg for the next 25 years. To make public transit the preferred mode of travel in the city, the WTMP identified in nine guiding principles: enhance customer experience; increase ridership; improve downtown mobility; complement land use development; improve multi-modal mobility; ensure transit is inclusive; continually innovate; empower healthy communities; and balance investment with affordability. A key aspect of the WTMP was a $538.89 million infrastructure plan that was approved for an application to the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program – Public Transit Infrastructure

Stream (ICIP-PTIS). All projects were approved by the City, Provincial, and Federal governments with the budgets listed below:

Priority	Project	Estimated Cost ($M)
1	Bus Radio and Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Replacement	$17.279
2	North Garage Replacement	$200.066
3	Transition to Zero-Emission Bus Program	$280.391
4	Rapid Transit (Downtown Corridors) Preliminary Design	$7.000
5	Primary Transit Network Infrastructure	$20.400
6	Wheelchair Securements Retrofit	$13.750
Total		**$538.886**

All of these projects are now in development.

Winnipeg Transit launched a completely new route network, known as the Primary Transit Network and Feeder Routes (PTN), on June 29, 2025.

History of North Garage Project

The initial estimate for the North Garage estimate was $200.066 million. This is a Class 5 estimate in 2019 dollars.

Delays in funding approval from senior levels of government meant that design work on many projects, including the North Garage Replacement, could not begin until several years after the April 2021 approval of the WTMP. This delay, combined with significant inflation during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, resulted in the cost estimate for the North Garage Replacement project (now known as Oak Point Garage, or OPG) increasing from $200.066 million in 2019 dollars to $305 million in 2025 dollars ($236.5 million in 2019 dollars, based on the Statistics Canada Building Construction Price Indexes). This has been confirmed in an updated Class 3 cost estimate.

The Transit Department subsequently refined the design in order to determine what the scope would be with only the original approved $200.066 million budget. An updated design that was substantially smaller was produced, reducing the size of OPG from 246 40-foot bus equivalents to 207 40-foot bus equivalents. Since receipt of bid submissions in response to the issuance of a construction tender for OPG, the size of the garage is now estimated to be 171 40-foot bus equivalents, if the construction award is approved by the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works.

WTMP Impact from Garage Scope Change

The WTMP proposed increasing the number of articulated buses in the fleet to 85 within 5-10 years of the WTMP approval, and to 145 within 20-25 years. Subsequent work on the development of the PTN has increased this, with Winnipeg Transit now targeting 150-200 articulated buses within 10 years. This reflects a goal of having nearly all buses operating on the Rapid (Blue) and Frequent Express (FX) lines be articulated buses, which would require approximately 150 articulated buses. If several key Frequent lines and Feeder Routes are added to this scenario, it brings the requirement to nearly 200 articulated buses.
The advantage of more articulated buses in the fleet is that each articulated bus can carry over 50 percent more passengers with a single bus operator, and a smaller increase in operating

costs than if the same level of service were provided with multiple 40-foot buses. Prior to the creation of the WTMP and the PTN, Winnipeg Transit could only operate articulated buses on a limited number of routes, such as the Blue Line, 60 Pembina, the 671 and 672 feeder routes serving the University of Manitoba, and some express routes. The ability to use articulated buses was limited by the size and position of bus stops. Many bus stops were located too close to intersections, which would result in articulated buses partially blocking intersections when stopped, or platforms were too short, especially in residential subdivisions.

The simplified routes in the Primary Transit Network, combined with the infrastructure being built under the ICIP-funded $20.4 million Primary Transit Network Infrastructure Project, would allow for articulated buses to be used on the expanded Blue Line, all Frequent Express Lines, many Frequent and Direct Lines, and some high-usage Feeder Routes. Having enough 60-foot articulated buses to dispatch onto these routes when and where they are needed forms a key part in Winnipeg Transit's strategy to grow ridership, reduce full bus pass-ups, and increase transit mode share in Winnipeg. These are goals that strongly align with the City of Winnipeg's Climate Action Plan.

The most significant risk to the WTMP from the reduced scope of OPG is pass-ups on Primary Transit Network lines, resulting from an insufficient number of 60-foot articulated buses in the fleet.

Over the past few years, Winnipeg Transit has had challenges in filling open bus operator positions, which has sometimes resulted in trips being cancelled without warning. While recruitment and staffing levels have increased, it remains a risk that future service growth could be limited by the availability of bus operators. Providing higher capacity vehicles enables more passengers per bus operator, which mitigates this risk.

The reduced project scope for OPG provides capacity for 171 40-foot buses, or 114 60-foot articulated buses. The functional capacity of a transit garage is less than the maximum capacity because of the need to move buses around. Additionally, the reduced scope of the maintenance facilities at OPG will limit the number of articulated buses that can be stored there to 72.

When combined with a functional capacity of 55 articulated buses at Brandon Garage, the functional storage and maintenance capacity for articulated buses across all garages is 127. This is substantially less than the need for 150-200 articulated that is currently envisioned.

Note that articulated buses cannot feasibly be stored at Winnipeg Transit's Fort Rouge Garage facility in its current configuration. FRG was designed and built in the 1960s, and the configuration of the building precludes the efficient storage of 60-foot articulated buses, unless significant retrofits are made, including reconstruction of firewalls, walkways, and emergency escape routes. Doing so would also require significant retrofitting of the existing HVAC and electrical infrastructure in the garage.

In order to have sufficient capacity for 150-200 articulated buses, Winnipeg Transit would need to do one of the following within five years (soon after 2030):

1. Build a second phase of Oak Point Garage; or

2. Retrofit Fort Rouge Garage.

The reduced scope of OPG eliminates many of the maintenance aspects originally planned for this garage. The reduced maintenance capacity will result in Winnipeg Transit having to shuttle buses in need of maintenance from Oak Point Garage to Fort Rouge Garage, especially for heavy maintenance.

The removal of elements related to the storage and maintenance of future zero-emission buses will also have an impact on the implementation of the WTMP. The WTMP's 25-year vision for transit service and infrastructure includes a transition to a zero-emission bus fleet. Zero-emission buses can help with ridership and service growth and a modal shift. With the reduced scope, OPG will be able to store a maximum of 24 battery-electric buses, and no fuel cell electric buses. Any additional battery electric or fuel cell bus purchases will require retrofitting both the storage and maintenance areas as well as purchasing charging and fueling equipment. The cost of transitioning fleet to zero-emission buses will be more costly because of this, and the City may need to pause the transition until additional money is available to retrofit the garage.

Based on the original fleet mix forecast in the WTMP, Winnipeg Transit was targeting 70 of 145 planned articulated buses to be long-range BEBs and the other 75 to be fuel-cell electric buses. Articulated fuel-cell electric buses have the necessary range to operate as a one-to-one service replacement for diesel buses, whereas articulated battery-electric buses are limited to runs of under 11 hours.

These limitations will reduce operational flexibility, and may further reduce Winnipeg Transit's ability to store, charge, and dispatch articulated buses from OPG.

With the reduced scope of Oak Point Garage, Winnipeg Transit will be facing the need to request significant capital funding within about five years (soon after 2030) for expansion of Oak Point Garage and/or a retrofit of Fort Rouge Garage.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Financial Impact Statemen Date: June 6, 2025

Project Name:

Effect of Reduced North Garage Replacement Project Scope on the Winnipeg Transit Master Plan

COMMENTS:

There is no impact from the recommendation in this report as it is for information only.

Laurie Fisher June 6, 2025
Laurie Fisher, CPA, CA
Manager of Finance & Administration

CONSULTATION

This Report has been prepared in consultation with:

n/a

OURWINNIPEG POLICY ALIGNMENT

OurWinnipeg 2045

Goal: Environmental Resilience, Objective 2: Prioritize sustainable transportation as the mobility options of choice.

> Prioritize sustainable transportation as the mobility options of choice. Transition to a sustainable transportation system that safely and efficiently moves people, goods and services, increases access to a variety of affordable mobility choices, encourages less reliance on personal vehicle travel, reduces travel time, mitigates congestion and related greenhouse gas emissions, and supports the development of denser, better-connected, healthy and complete communities.

Policy 2.9: Reduce Road Congestion

> Increase the efficiency, convenience and usage of the active and public transportation system, to improve air quality, provide a viable alternative to the automobile, and reduce current and future road congestion.

Winnipeg Transit Master Plan

Network Goals:

> Enhance Customer Experience
> Increase Ridership
> Improve Downtown Mobility
> Complement Land-Use Development
> Improve Multi-modal Mobility
> Ensure Transit is Inclusive
> Continuously Innovate
> Balance Investment with Affordability

WINNIPEG CLIMATE ACTION PLAN ALIGNMENT

This report is in accordance with the Winnipeg Climate Action Plan (WCAP) as per Direction 3.1 Increase Use and Efficiency of Public Transit Systems (p.46).

Relevant actions include: Deliver continuous improvement in transit service with a focus on customer service, reliability, and route connectivity, and public education (found on page 46 of the WCAP).

WINNIPEG POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY ALIGNMENT

Goal 5(a) Transportation System Equity is Enhanced – the affordability and accessibility of transportation and transit service is increased.

Goal 5(b) Transportation System Equity is Enhanced – improvements to transportation and transit infrastructure and services prioritize areas of higher poverty, and increased interconnectivity to employment and affordable goods and services.

SUBMITTED BY

Department: Transit
Division: Service Development
Prepared by: Bjorn Radstrom – Manager of Service Development
Date: June 13, 2025