

Westboro Collision Coroner's Inquest City's Response and Action Plan

**Transit Committee
June 12, 2025**



Timeline of Events

- January 11, 2019, a collision at Westboro Station resulted in the deaths of three passengers: Judy Booth, Bruce Thomlinson, and Anthonia Van Beek.
- The City of Ottawa accepted civil responsibility for the collision in 2020.
- Westboro Interim Collision Review Report in October 2020.
- Office of the Auditor General (OAG) - Audit on the Review of OC Transpo Driving Training took place in 2020.
- Ongoing improvements to the New Bus Operator Training (NBOT) Training Program started in 2020 and continue to date.
- A criminal trial was held in 2021 the bus driver was acquitted of all criminal charges.
- A Coroner's Inquest took place from April 2, 2025, to May 1, 2025.

Background

- A Coroner's Inquest is a quasi-judicial process, presided over by a Coroner to investigate certain deaths occurring within the province.
- The inquest jury is not empowered to determine legal responsibility or draw legal conclusions.
- A key function of an inquest is for the jury to make recommendations aimed at preventing similar deaths in the future.
- The inquest explored several topics, including:
 - Bus operator training
 - Safety oversight
 - Transitway construction
- Representatives of the City, Local Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) 279, and two families of the deceased were granted standing to participate.

Introduction

- The City of Ottawa thanks the Coroner and the Jury for their efforts in developing, reviewing, and providing these recommendations.
- The recommendations reach beyond Transit Services and, where relevant, the City has adopted a cross-departmental approach in developing the Action Plan.
- The Coroner's Inquest recommendations and the City's Action Plan are focused on improving safety for the future.
- Our commitment is to transparency, accountability, and the continued improvement of safety.
- The Coroner's Inquest resulted in 60 recommendations:
 - 19 of the recommendations are directed to external parties.
 - 41 recommendations are directed to the City of Ottawa.

Delivering the Action Plan

- The City's formal response to the Inquest consists of a companion report, providing an overview of the City's response, and an update on work done to respond to the recommendations.
- The companion report also includes:
 - The complete Final Report of the Coroner's Inquest, outlining all 60 recommendations; and
 - The City's Action Plan responding to the applicable 41 recommendations directed to the City.
- Transit Services will lead the City's response to the recommendations.
- Other Departments have been identified and consulted throughout, including:
 - Infrastructure and Water Services;
 - Public Works;
 - Finance and Corporate Services (Fleet Safety); and
 - Legal Services.

Recommendations by Theme

Guiding Principles

Driver Assistance
Technology

Infrastructure

Safety Data
Collection and
Analysis

Safety Oversight

Training

Funding

Recommendations
Assigned to Non-
City Stakeholder

Theme 1 - Guiding Principles

The Inquest specifically states:

- “The City shall ensure that all decisions regarding public transit consider safety as the prime concern by adopting the following measures. All decisions regarding fleets, infrastructure and passengers should be viewed through a safety lens, with consideration of a safe systems approach at planning, implementation and maintenance stages.
 - a) All safety decisions should be actioned in a timely, coordinated manner. To this end, automated alarms or a “bring forward system” should be implemented for all safety decisions.
 - b) A responsible person should be designated for the tracking of any safety initiatives or responses, and these initiatives and responses should be reported on a regular basis to a high level of authority, with clear accountability assigned.
 - c) Key Performance Indicators for safety should be reviewed at the highest level of Ottawa transit decision making on a regular basis, with a focus on continuous improvement.”
- Safety is always at the forefront of every decision in transit.

Theme 2 - Driver Assistance Technology

- Two recommendations are focused on the implementation of new and emerging technologies to improve transit safety (Recommendation 37 and 38).
- These recommendations focus on the introduction of driver assistance and speed assistance technologies, including collaboration with other municipal bus transit operators and bus manufacturers.
- Staff support these recommendations, and implementation can be achieved through collaboration with external benchmarking groups and industry associations such as the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA), the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), the Union Internationale des Transports Publics (UITP), and the International Bus Benchmarking Group (IBBG).

Theme 3 - Infrastructure

- Thirteen (13) recommendations are related to infrastructure, 8 of which currently have elements already implemented.
- These recommendations include items such as:
 - Potentially reducing the speed limit to 30km/h on approach to a transitway station (Recommendation 2)
 - Explore physical countermeasures such as concrete barriers (Recommendation 2b);
 - Assess additional traffic speed reduction strategies (Recommendation 3);
 - Assess the transitways for potential intrusion hazards (Recommendation 4);
 - Install radar speed signs (Recommendation 5);
 - Enhance transitway construction projects and contractual administration (Recommendations 6, 7, 8, 9); and,
 - Ensure appropriate snow removal along the transitways (Recommendation 11).

Theme 4 - Safety Data Collection and Analysis

- 8 recommendations are related to the collection and analysis of various safety KPIs, 4 of which currently have elements already implemented.
- These recommendations include items such as:
 - Standardize the radar speed enforcement program (Recommendation 32);
 - Expand the telematics program on busses (Recommendation 34);
 - The installation of operator-facing cameras on all busses (Recommendation 36); and,
 - Publishing safety Key Performance Indicators (Recommendation 39).

Theme 5 - Safety Oversight

- 4 recommendations are related to safety oversight, 1 of which currently has elements already implemented.
- 2 recommendations are related to promoting various key safety messages.
- The remaining 2 recommendations in this category include:
 - That the City increase driver license abstract checks (Recommendation 27), and,
 - That the City conduct an annual safety audit examining the implications of new or modified regulations relating to transitway infrastructure and transit vehicles (Recommendation 29).

Theme 6 - Training

- 12 recommendations are related to training, 7 of which currently have elements already implemented.
- The New Bus Operator Training (NBOT) Program has been enhanced significantly since 2019.
- Some recommendations speak to further enhancements in mentorship and professional skills building training. In addition to further training on human factors, distractions, and familiarity on routes.
- Other training recommendations speak to:
 - That the City examining the feasibility of upgrading or replacing the simulator (Recommendation 23), and,
 - That the City introduce a dedicated fleet of busses dedicated for training purposes (Recommendation 24).

Theme 7 - Funding

The Inquest specifically states:

- Recommendation 60:
 - The City, Province and Government of Canada should seek, secure and maintain funding to support the implementation of the above recommendations.
- Staff are currently evaluating all recommendations and their potential budget implications.
- 24 of the 41 recommendations could have budget implications.
- Staff will review this as part of the budget process.
- The City will continue to work proactively with all levels of government to secure additional funding required to implement these recommendations.

Theme 8 - Recommendations Assigned to Non-City Stakeholders

- Of the 60 recommendations, 19 are directed to external stakeholders such as:
 - Ministry of Transportation of Ontario (MTO);
 - Transportation Safety Board (TSB);
 - Transport Canada;
 - Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA); and
 - Ontario Public Transit Association (OPTA).
- For a full breakdown of these 19 recommendations, please refer to Document 1 of the staff report.

Next Steps

- The City will continue to assess all recommendations and the feasibility of their implementation.
- As noted in the Action Plan:
 - Several recommendations have small to medium budget implications;
 - Several recommendations have a currently unknown budget implication; and,
 - Some recommendations may have an impact on customer travel times.
- Where possible, the City will take a phased approach in addressing and implementing the recommendations directed to the City.
- The City will bring an updated Action Plan to Transit Committee in Q3 2025.

Questions?