

# YOUR GUIDE TO TRANSIT LEVY BYLAW CITY OF SARNIA



On September 11, 2017 Sarnia City Council will consider whether to eliminate the Transit Special Service Area By-law, which would effectively require all properties in the city to pay the “transit levy”, whether they are located near the transit area or not. The public has until August 4 to comment.

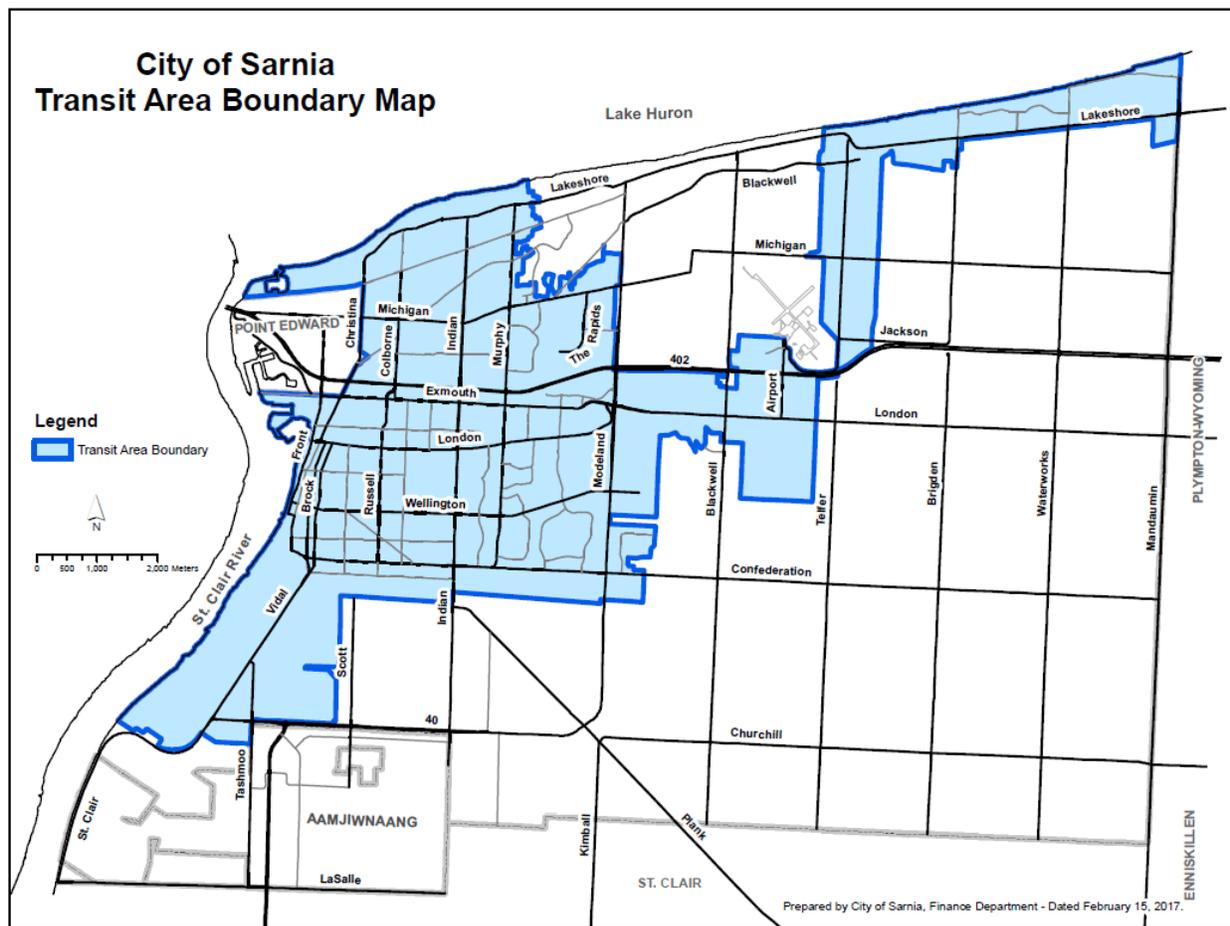
## WHY ELIMINATE THE TRANSIT SERVICE AREA?

The Transit Master Plan, which was endorsed by City Council in 2014, states that “in order to deliver transit service to the newly developed areas of the City as well as eliminate the policy conflict between the conventional and specialized transit services, the City should consider rescinding its Transit Special Service Areas By-law.

## Definitions

<b>Transit Special Services Area (TSA)</b>	<p>The area of the city where transit service is provided and property taxes include the cost of transit. Properties are included in this area if they are located within 450 m of a bus route.</p> <p>See Map 1.</p>
<b>Conventional Transit</b>	<p>Public bus transportation that is provided along fixed bus routes within a defined area of the city (the TSA) according to a set schedule.</p>
<b>Specialized Transit (Care-A-Van service)</b>	<p>Accessible door-to-door transportation using lift equipped vehicles for those unable to use conventional transit due to a physical disability.</p> <p>Service covers the entire city, but is available only to those who qualify.</p>
<b>Transit Levy</b>	<p>Officially called the Transit Special Service Area Rate, it is a tax that is used to fund Conventional Transit.</p>

## Map 1 – Transit Special Services Area



### Why was the Transit Special Service Area created?

The TSA was established under By-Law 40 of 2003 because it was believed that properties located near a bus route enjoyed this “additional benefit”. As a result, only properties located within the TSA pay municipal taxes for conventional transit services in Sarnia.

### How many properties are located in Sarnia’s TSA?

91% of residential properties are located in the TSA. This does not factor in commercial or industrial properties.

### How are Sarnia’s transit services currently funded?

Conventional transit is funded by businesses and residents who own property located within the TSA (i.e. within 405 m of a bus route). It is also funded by riders who purchase bus fares and passes.

Care-A-Van service is funded through the general levy by all Sarnia tax payers.

Both transit services are also funded by grants from the provincial and federal governments.

## Why is the City considering eliminating the Transit Special Service Area?

The Transportation Master Plan (TMP) recommends that the City consider eliminating the TSA for two reasons:

1. **Ease development** – each time a new subdivision is developed, or a property is severed, the assessment roll must be updated to identify if those properties are located in the TSA. The by-law must be amended on occasion to encompass the new properties. If all properties are included in the TSA, this would not be necessary. As much of Sarnia’s future development will be outside of the TSA, it is believed this will make development easier.
2. **Eliminate a policy conflict between the two types of transit service-** Conventional and Specialized Transit are taxed differently. By eliminating the TSA by-law, both forms of transit would be funded through the general levy and administrative costs would be reduced. Currently, the Department of Finance must duplicate all tax-related functions for those who currently pay the Transit Levy, create and maintain separate budgets and manually allocate costs to each transit system.

## If the Transit Special Service Area was eliminated, how would it impact taxpayers?

If the Transit Special Service Area Rate (TSA rate) were eliminated, all taxpayers would have to pay the “Transit Levy”. Those who used to pay the TSA rate would save anywhere from \$2.17 to \$25.96 per \$100,000 of assessment. Those who did not pay the TSA rate would pay between \$11.75 and \$141.23 more per \$100,000 assessment.

## How would it impact the transit revenues?

The total amount of revenues collected would remain the same.

## Would transit services be expanded or improved?

There are no plans to increase or decrease conventional or specialized transit services based on this decision.

**TAKE ACTION** Sarnia residents have until August 4 to:

Take the survey: <http://clerks.smartsarnia.com/>

Email the City: [transit@smartsarnia.ca](mailto:transit@smartsarnia.ca) or call 519-332-0330

Write to Council: <http://www.sarnia.ca/city-government/agendas-minutes-and-non-agenda-mail/city-council-agendas-minutes-and-non-agenda-mail/city-council/sarnia-city-council-members>

Email the Chamber: [speakup@slchamber.ca](mailto:speakup@slchamber.ca)

## RESOURCES

[Transit Master Plan 2014](#)

[Staff Report April 10, 2017](#)  
Levy Special Service Area Rate for  
Transit

[SmartSarnia.com](http://SmartSarnia.com)