



Update to Middlesex County Council
November 23, 2021

Overview

- Year 1 at a Glance
- Scenario Planning
 - Business Route
 - App Technology
 - On-Demand Service
- Current Project Status and Ridership
- Marketing and Communications Initiatives
- Advertising Kit
- Regional Transit Initiatives: RTSF and London Regional Hub

Year 1 of Operation

- Launched September 21, 2020
 - 2 routes running Monday to Friday
 - Route 1: Connecting Oxford County, Thorndale, and London
 - Route 2: Connecting Dorchester and London
 - AODA compliant buses and driver training
- COVID Considerations/Effects
 - On-board precautions in place
 - Scaled back marketing efforts following Provincial instruction
 - Lower than anticipated ridership
- Continuous monitoring and evaluation



Year 1 of Operation

- September 2020 – March 2021: Maintain rider confidence and consistency
 - While the pandemic did affect ridership, the original fixed routes remained unchanged throughout the past year to keep a stable system in place for residents to rely on and trust
- April 2021: Route 3 Added
 - Saturday afternoon route
 - Focus on leisure/shopping: direct trips between Dorchester and Thorndale and Masonville Mall
- October 2021: Nilestown and Route 2 extension
 - Route 2 added Nilestown as a new stop
 - Route 2 was extended to end the evening route in London (Argyle Mall)
 - Both decisions resulting from rider feedback



NEW STOP!

Nilestown

on Route 2 to London

Starting October 4



New Saturday Route!



Ride Middlesex County Connect on Saturdays for direct routes between Dorchester/Thorndale and Masonville Mall

visit middlesex.ca/ct for more information

Multiple scenarios were considered, all with the goal of incorporating potential new innovations and technologies that can make a practical difference for riders and contribute to the overall future vitality of Middlesex County Connect operations.

1. Thames Centre Business Route
2. Electronic Payment/App Technology
3. On-Demand Service

Future Scenario Planning

With the impact of the pandemic and current ridership, there is an opportunity to reassess how we deliver our transportation service and seek better ways of doing things, with the goal of increasing ridership and meeting community needs.

June 2021: A Transportation Needs Assessment Survey was conducted with Thames Centre businesses to understand the issues and needs of local employers related to transportation, and to address them through potential future enhancements to the Community Transportation Program.

9 Thames Centre businesses took part in the survey.

The responses highlighted that:

- At the time of the survey, the majority of these businesses indicated they would not be interested in contributing to the financial sustainability of the service as they did not feel there was a current demand for a dedicated business route.
- Some businesses noted that the service could assist in getting clients/customers to their business
- Many businesses do not fit the standard time constraints of a set schedule; highlighting the need for a more flexible option, such as an on-demand service

DECISION: Do not move forward with a dedicated business route in Thames Centre at the current time. We will continue to monitor and have ongoing conversations with businesses as their needs evolve and change.

Thames Centre Business Route

Electronic Payment/App Technology

- May 2021: Southwest Community Transit (SCT) association invited qualified proponents to submit proposals for the creation of a digital transit booking application and web portal booking platform to assist with the provision of inter and intra community transportation services.
- The current operating model was deemed insufficient to meet the ride booking and customer service needs. It was decided that digital booking platforms needed to be integrated for our services to be successful and sustainable in the long term. In addition, the digital platform provides the ability and option to integrate on-demand and flex stop options to increase service access in low ridership and rural areas; a potential future need for some municipal services, including Middlesex County Connect.
- After working with an app provider over the last 5 months, the final product was not able to be properly implemented due to provider related issues, and a new option needs to be explored.

Electronic Payment System



Convenience factor for riders in today's digital world



Increase access to the service/reach various demographics who rely on digital payment



Improve customer service, rider experience, and efficiency;



Health and safety factor for COVID or other related reasons



Easier integration of demographic specific pricing model (ex. student rate, senior rate, etc.)

For example, Square card readers could be integrated to the existing iPad on-board the bus to accept contactless and chip payments with funds directly placed in our account.

App Technology

How to use Middlesex County Connect

Book a ride with the
tap of a button



Ensure a convenient and reliable trip booking experience through a user-friendly mobile app and web portal;



Increase ridership and improve customer access to ride booking capabilities and service information;



Improve customer service, rider experience, and efficiency;



Create a seamless customer experience through pre-booking, fare payment, transfers, and ride tracking;



Enable the creation of an integrated community transportation network in Southwestern Ontario.



Enable reporting capabilities outlining travel patterns, peak usage, volumes, and other key information and metrics

Electronic Payment/App Technology

- As of November 2021, we are looking at alternative payment and/or app options to implement for our fixed route service, keeping in mind the future incorporation of on-demand options
 - Working with other SCT partners

On-Demand Service

- Pending the acquisition of an app technology , Middlesex County Connect will have the option to include an on-demand transportation component in addition, or in replacement to, the existing fixed route service.
- It has been difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of the current system under COVID-19, however, the service, as it currently stands, is not sustainable given the lack of ridership. There is a strong need to test different approaches to ensure the future sustainability of the system as a whole.
- The app technology will set-up, run, and monitor the on-demand service. The platform will set the boundaries and service zone(s), set driver shifts, track vehicles, book trips, and more.
- Riders use the app to book, pay, and track their rides while drivers use the app to validate rider fares, including cash, passes, and contactless options, as well as receive dynamically routed pick-up and drop-off instructions. Driver manifests are continuously re-optimized based on rider demand and changing traffic conditions to ensure the most efficient route is taken each time.

On-Demand

- Value Add



Increasing service coverage and public transit ridership



Increasing efficiency through dynamically optimizing schedules



Decreasing costs per passenger and overall operating costs



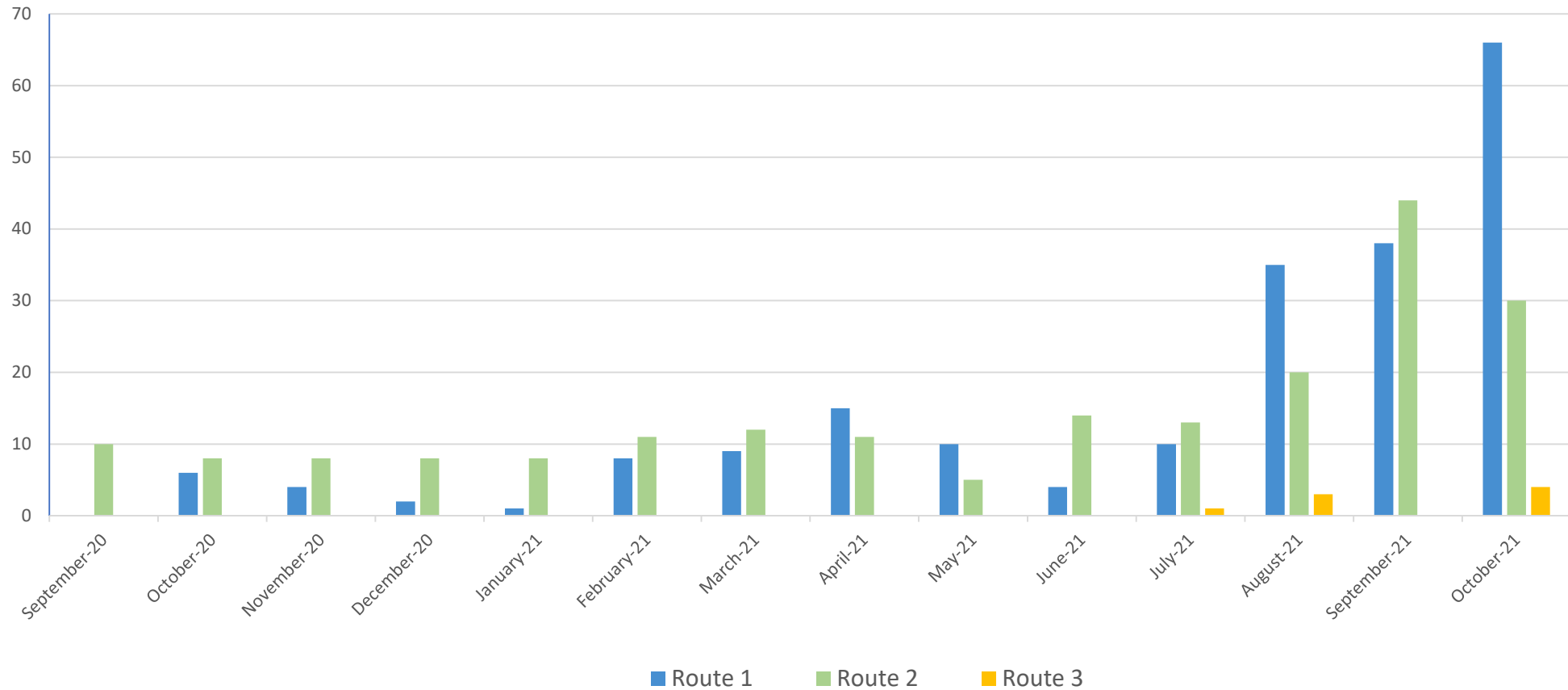
Increasing reliability and on-time performance



Increasing sustainability and reducing transit's environmental footprint

Monthly Ridership

September 2020 - October 2021



Ridership Stats

Marketing and Communications

- Increased marketing efforts via new and existing channels throughout second half of 2021
- COVID-19 reopening provides the opportunity for a wide dissemination of transit information as more individuals begin to travel outside of their homes
- All considerations made to focus on target populations: students, workers, seniors, low-income individuals



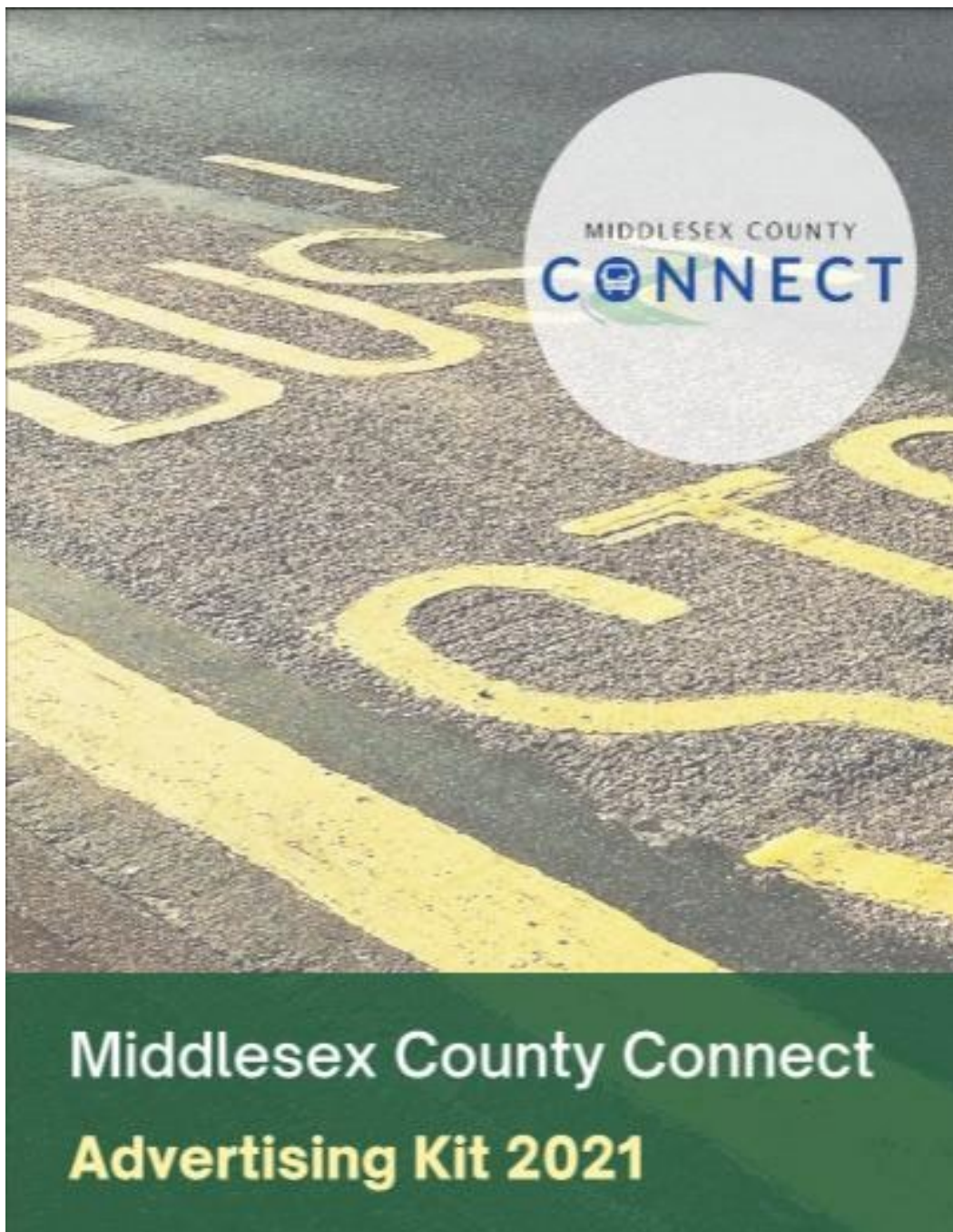
Marketing and Communications

ROUTES & SCHEDULES			
Route 1: Monday - Friday			
Stop	AM Route 1	PM Route 1	AM Route 2
Woodstock - Transit Terminal	8:30 AM	3:30 PM	
Hamstead - Oxford St. Municipal Lib.	9:30 AM	3:30 PM	
Hamstead - Public Library	10:00 AM	4:00 PM	
Thorndale - Community Centre	11:00 AM	4:30 PM	
Thorndale - West Mission Pl.	11:30 AM	4:30 PM	
London - Fanshawe College	12:00 PM	4:30 PM	
London - Massville Mall	12:30 PM	4:30 PM	
Thorndale - West Mission Pl.	1:00 PM	3:30 PM	
Thorndale - Community Centre	1:30 PM	3:30 PM	
London - Fanshawe College	2:00 PM	3:30 PM	
London - Massville Mall	2:30 PM	3:30 PM	
Thorndale - West Mission Pl.	3:00 PM	3:30 PM	
Hamstead - Public Library	3:30 PM	3:30 PM	
Hamstead - Oxford St. Municipal Lib.	4:00 PM	3:30 PM	
Woodstock - Transit Terminal	4:30 PM	3:30 PM	
Route 2: Monday - Friday			
Stop	AM Route 2	PM Route 2	AM Route 3
Dorchester - Catherine St.	8:30 AM	3:30 PM	
Dorchester - Municipal Office	9:00 AM	3:30 PM	
Dorchester - Near Woodbury Drive	9:30 AM	3:30 PM	
Dorchester - Near Woodbury Drive	10:00 AM	3:30 PM	
Dorchester - Right Care Centre	10:30 AM	3:30 PM	
Dorchester - Near MTR	11:00 AM	3:30 PM	
Whitson - Hamilton Rd. North side	11:30 AM	3:30 PM	
London - Apple Hill	12:00 PM	3:30 PM	
London - Fanshawe College	12:30 PM	3:30 PM	
Dorchester - Catherine St.	1:00 PM	3:30 PM	
Dorchester - Municipal Office	1:30 PM	3:30 PM	
Dorchester - Near Woodbury Drive	2:00 PM	3:30 PM	
Dorchester - Near Woodbury Drive	2:30 PM	3:30 PM	
Dorchester - Right Care Centre	3:00 PM	3:30 PM	
Dorchester - Near MTR	3:30 PM	3:30 PM	
Whitson - Hamilton Rd. North side	4:00 PM	3:30 PM	
London - Apple Hill	4:30 PM	3:30 PM	
London - Fanshawe College	5:00 PM	3:30 PM	
Dorchester - Catherine St.	5:30 PM	3:30 PM	
Route 3: Saturday ONLY			
Stop	AM Route 3	PM Route 3	AM Route 4
Dorchester - Right Care Centre	8:30 AM	3:30 PM	
Dorchester - Catherine St.	9:00 AM	3:30 PM	
Thorndale - Community Centre	9:30 AM	3:30 PM	
London - Massville Mall (Bldg.)	10:00 AM	3:30 PM	
London - Massville Mall (Bldg.)	10:30 AM	3:30 PM	
Thorndale - Community Centre	11:00 AM	3:30 PM	
Dorchester - Catherine St.	11:30 AM	3:30 PM	
Dorchester - Right Care Centre (Bldg.)	12:00 PM	3:30 PM	
Dorchester - Community Centre	12:30 PM	3:30 PM	
London - Massville Mall (Bldg.)	1:00 PM	3:30 PM	
London - Massville Mall (Bldg.)	1:30 PM	3:30 PM	
Thorndale - Community Centre	2:00 PM	3:30 PM	
Dorchester - Catherine St.	2:30 PM	3:30 PM	
Dorchester - Right Care Centre (Bldg.)	3:00 PM	3:30 PM	
Dorchester - Community Centre	3:30 PM	3:30 PM	
London - Massville Mall (Bldg.)	4:00 PM	3:30 PM	
London - Massville Mall (Bldg.)	4:30 PM	3:30 PM	
Thorndale - Community Centre	5:00 PM	3:30 PM	
Dorchester - Catherine St.	5:30 PM	3:30 PM	
Dorchester - Right Care Centre	6:00 PM	3:30 PM	



Information brochure

- Our increased marketing strategy entails:
 - Bell radio advertisement campaigns across two regional stations (August –Sept. 2021)
 - Promotional video campaign launch in August 2021
 - Information brochures at bus stops and in community buildings and businesses
 - Fanshawe College promotion specific materials
 - Social media and online campaigns across Middlesex County and other partner platforms (Twitter, Facebook, Website)
 - Middlesex County Connect branded promotional materials (masks, mugs, etc.)
 - Dorchester Signpost newspaper article (October 2021) and Megapaper ad



- Offering local businesses the opportunity to advertise on the buses with:
 - Bus shelter ads
 - Interior rack cards
 - Exterior ads
- Variety of sizes and ad length times offered (4 week intervals)
- Financial contribution for the overall sustainability of the service
- Soft launched September 2021 with increased marketing efforts slated for 2022

Local/Regional Transit Initiatives

- London Downtown Regional Transit Hub
 - Middlesex County was invited to help inform the conceptual framework for the Hub
 - Improve delivery of MCC, expand connection points, help ensure future sustainability
- October 2021: Application submitted to Infrastructure Canada' Rural Transit Solutions Fund: Planning and Design Stream
 - Exploration of County wide on-demand transportation planning
 - SCOR also submitted a RTSF application intending to complete a service review to maximize efficiencies and encourage the consolidation and sustainability of Southwestern Ontario's inter-community transit systems.
- Ongoing conversations and collaborative planning with other regional SCT members
- CTGP Funding Extension: 2023-2025

- Update all community partners on new initiatives
- Continue communication and marketing effort to build brand awareness; collaborative approach working with all partners and local media
- Continuous community engagement efforts and utilization of service evaluation framework; adjust and monitor service accordingly
- Promote advertising opportunities for local and regional businesses using ad kit
- Explore new electronic/app alternative and begin implementation phase
- Explore and plan for on-demand pilot project (2022) and other regional expansion opportunities and collaborations

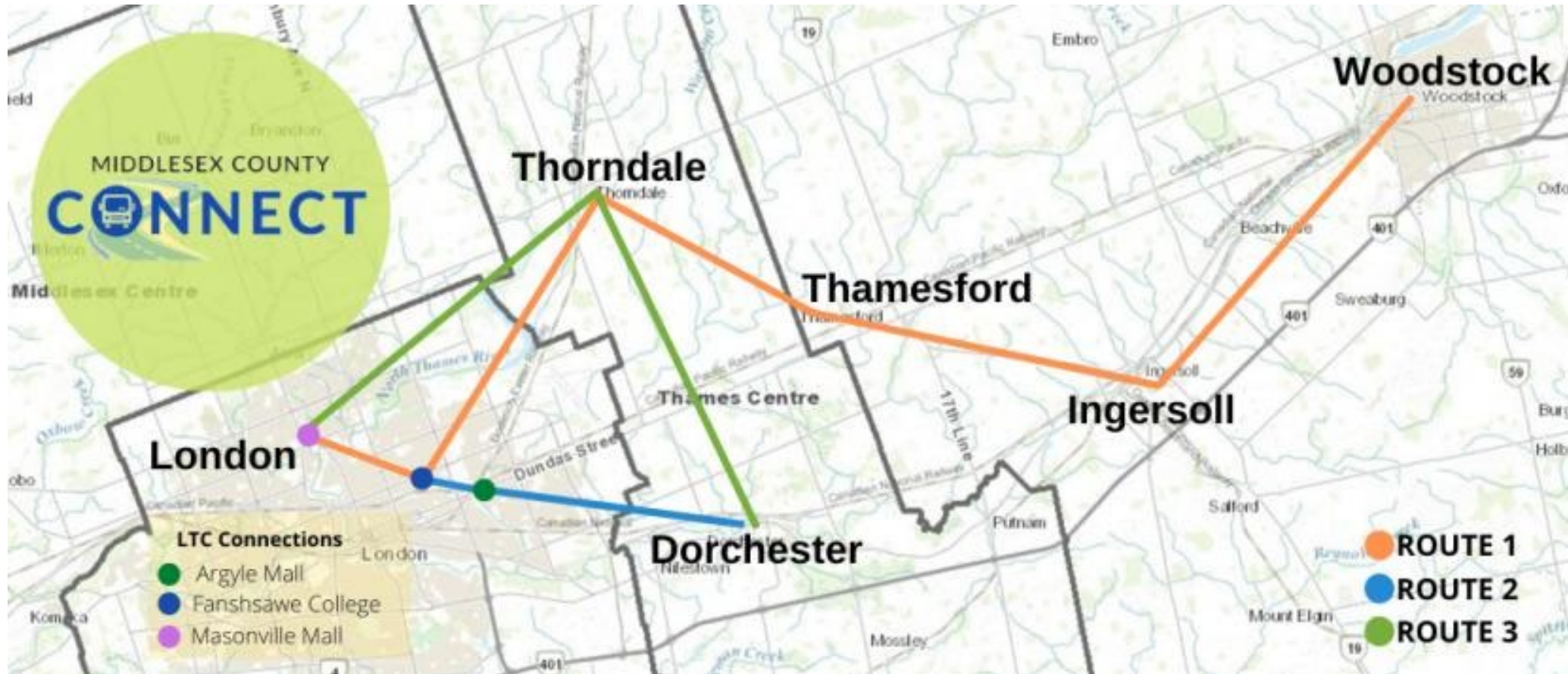


Summary of Next Steps

County Connect Promotional Video

9000+
views on
social
media





Questions? Feedback?