

Title: Port Robinson Ferry
Report Number: CAO2017-06
Meeting Date: Tuesday, September 19, 2017
Report Prepared: September 15, 2017

RECOMMENDATION(S):

The General Committee recommends the following:

- 1) That this report be received for information.
- 2) That the General Committee of Council respectfully request the Regional Municipality of Niagara to continue to fund the Port Robinson Ferry (Bridge-It) at the current funding level of \$66,500 per year for the next ten years (to align with the current 2027 expiration date of the lease agreement with the St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation (SLSMC)).
- 3) That this report be circulated to the Region of Niagara, cities of Niagara Falls and Welland for information.

REPORT:

The ferry was established in 1975 as a way to reconnect the east and west sides of Port Robinson following a shipping accident which destroyed the Port Robinson Bridge. The ferry continues to be used by Niagara residents as well as tourists. As outlined in the previous Port Robinson to Chippawa (Bridge-It Route) report (CAO2017-05), the Port Robinson Ferry ("Bridge-It") acts as a crucial piece of the Bridge-It Route, as well as the Greater Niagara Circle Route (GNCR). The connection that the ferry provides will continue to become more utilized as cycling tourism is continuously increasing in popularity. The future all day GO train service (as well as the current weekend summer service) are important connections to the cycling circuit. The ferry allows the GNCR to be subdivided into two shorter routes, further encouraging day travel to Niagara. In addition, the Bridge-It Route (including the ferry service) could potentially help secure grant money, such as the provincial government's upcoming funding opportunities for cycling tourism.

In addition to tourists, the ferry service is also heavily used by local residents, particularly this season, following a number of upgrades and enhancements which include:

- Accessible (AODA compliant) docks
- Accessible ferry including new ramp

- Better route signage has been developed and installed
- Establishment of the Port Robinson Ferry Committee
 - Organized two successful events (each with over 200 participants)
 - Marketing and communications of the service have been significantly improved.
 - Canada 150 event at Club Castropignano
 - Niagara Free Wheelers event

These upgrades, along with the increasing popularity of cycling tourism, have resulted in a significant increase in ridership (refer Appendix A).

In addition to the growth in ridership, a number of developments are planned in and around the Port Robinson area, strengthening the need and importance of a cross-Canal connection. Approximately 14,000 people and jobs are planned for the Port Robinson West Secondary Plan and potentially over 5,000 new residents in the East Fonthill Secondary Plan (refer Appendix A).

The City of Thorold has made substantial commitments in order to keep the ferry service running. These include, but are not limited to the following:

- Secured a 10 year lease agreement with the SLSMC
- Significant staff resources regarding the management of operations, maintenance, and administration of the service
- Liability insurance in the amount of \$10,000,000
- Directional and wayfinding signage
- Development of marketing materials and communication/promotion of the service

The ferry provides a much needed connection across the canal and offers benefits not only to Port Robinson residents but to all Niagara residents, as well as generating tourism traffic and benefits. Although the City realises the importance of the ferry and the inter-municipal connections it helps to provide, the City of Thorold will be unable to solely maintain the ferry service without continued funding support from the Regional Municipality of Niagara.

BUDGETARY STATUS:

Not applicable.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

1. Community Well-Being
2. Promote Active Transportation

CANADIAN CONTENT:

Not applicable.

ATTACHMENTS:

Appendix A – Port Robinson Ferry Ridership

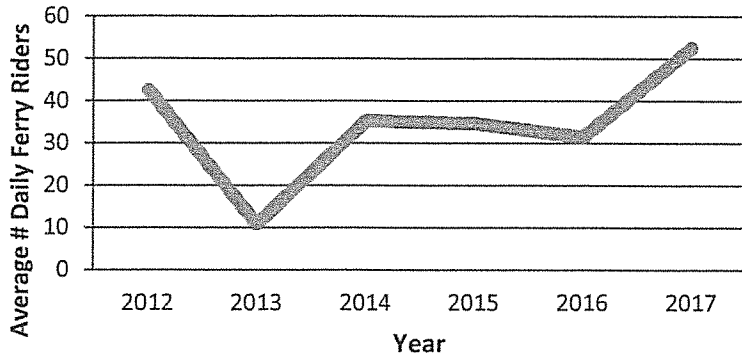
PREPARED BY: “original signed” Manoj Dilwaria, Chief Administrative Officer

SUBMITTED BY: “original signed” Manoj Dilwaria, Chief Administrative Officer

APPROVED BY: “original signed” Manoj Dilwaria, Chief Administrative Officer

Port Robinson Ferry (Bridge-It) Ridership

Average Daily Ferry Riders (June-Aug)



2012-2017 (June – August) Bridge-It Ferry Ridership Statistics

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Year over year growth	-11%	-74%	226%	0%	-9%	67%

2017

- Installation of accessible docks, ferry boat with ramp, and improved directional and wayfinding signage
- Average Daily Weekday Ridership = 48 riders/day
- Average Daily Weekend Ridership = 84 riders/day
- A total of over 540 participants attended the 2 events held in July and August
- The 2017 service start was delayed until Mid-June due to accessibility upgrades
- Higher ridership (4,105) in under 3 months of data in 2017 (mid-June to August) than the full 2016 season (5 months)

Port Robinson Area Future Developments

