



The Corporation of the
City of Sault Ste. Marie

COUNCIL REPORT

May 25, 2026

TO: Mayor Matthew Shoemaker and Members of City Council
AUTHOR: Nicole Maione, Director of Community Services
DEPARTMENT: Community Development and Enterprise Services
RE: Transit Update – Sault Loops

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the implementation and upcoming launch of the new Transit network, “Sault Loops.”

Background

The following resolution was passed on November 3, 2025:

Resolved that the report from the Director of Community Services dated November 3, 2025 concerning the Transit Optimization and Terminal Relocation Study be received and that staff:

- 1. Be directed to implement the new route network referred to as “Sault Loops;”*
- 2. Be directed to return to fixed-route service on weekend evenings in place of On-Demand and discontinue On-Demand service with the launch of Sault Loops;*
- 3. Be directed to expand the “Home to Hub” service to Pawating Place with the launch of Sault Loops;*
- 4. Be directed to explore software options to improve scheduling of Parabus clients;*
- 5. Be directed to review fare structure and bring it to budget in a future year;*
- 6. Expand the Community Bus to include all nursing and retirement homes and report back to Council regarding the cost to do so; and*
- 7. Be directed to re-visit the relocation of the downtown terminal and bring it to budget in a future year.*

Since that time, with respect to items one, two, and three, staff have undertaken extensive planning and operational preparation to ensure a successful system launch of Sault Loops.

Analysis

The new Sault Loops network is scheduled to launch on June 7, 2026. Following extensive community consultation, this modernized system represents an advancement in service delivery and is designed to improve reliability, accessibility, and overall rider experience.

The network introduces four new routes:

- Citywide
- Eastside
- Hillside
- Westside

This will result in more efficient transfers, reduced travel times, fewer service gaps during the day, and more frequent service with 15-minute intervals during peak periods and 30-minute intervals during evenings and weekends. The existing On-Demand service will be replaced by the Sault Loops network, while the Community Bus service will remain unchanged.

Recognizing the scale of this transition, staff have proactively implemented measures to support riders during the adjustment period. Transit personnel will be strategically deployed at key locations throughout the launch to provide direct, on-the-ground assistance. While some initial challenges are anticipated with a system-wide change of this magnitude, the transition has been carefully planned to minimize disruption and support users at every stage.

Operators and administrative staff have completed comprehensive training, including route simulations, to ensure familiarity with the new network. Additional staff will be in place during the first week of implementation to provide enhanced operational oversight and customer support to assist passengers during the transition.

Public Works has completed the installation, relocation, and removal of bus stops and signs required to support the new network, ensuring the infrastructure is ready for launch.

Communications Campaign

Staff have carried out a multi-channel communications strategy to ensure passengers are well informed ahead of the launch.

Engagement efforts have included public information pop-ups at Sault College, Algoma University, and the Transit Terminal. Additionally, on-site customer service support will be present at the terminal and key locations during the launch to provide additional assistance and answer passenger questions.

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Flyers and posters are posted on each bus with QR codes that link to updated route maps and schedules on the City website. Direct outreach to community partners and agencies was made via email, informing them of the changes.

Website and Digital Platforms

A dedicated transit webpage with updated maps and schedules was created.

Paid advertising was implemented across local media outlets (print, electronic, and radio) and social media.

Trip planning platforms, including AnyRide, Google Trip Planner, and the BlindSquare app, will be updated at 12:00 a.m. on June 7, 2026, to align with the new service. This timing ensures a seamless transition, as only one General Feed Specification (GTFS) dataset can be active at a time.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Strategic Plan / Policy Impact / Climate Impact

The implementation of Sault Loops directly supports the City's Strategic Plan for 2024-2027 in several ways.

- Within the Service Delivery focus area, it continues to assist in delivering excellent customer service to citizens by providing safe, accessible, and customer-focused transit services.
- Travelling by public transportation reduces community dependency on single-occupancy vehicles, which produces less transportation emissions, a key mitigation strategy to reducing the impacts of climate change and meeting the City's net-zero emissions target by 2050.

Recommendation

It is therefore recommended that Council take the following action:

Resolved that the report from the Director of Community Services dated May 25, 2026 concerning Transit Sault Loops Update be received as information.

Respectfully submitted,

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Director of Community Services

Community Development and Enterprise Services

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