SAUGEEN MOBILITY

and REGIONAL TRANSIT

GENERAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Friday, February 3, 2023, 1:30 p.m. Via Videoconference

Board Members Present: Ed McGugan, Councillor Township of Huron-Kinloss, President

Doug Townsend, Councillor, West Grey, Vice-President Warren Dickert, Councillor, Town of Hanover, Past President

Cheryl Grace, Councillor, Saugeen Shores Doug Kennedy, Councillor, Kincardine

Scott Mackey, Mayor, Township of Chatsworth Jennifer Christie-Shaw, Councillor, Arran-Elderslie Monica Singh-Soares, Councillor, Southgate

Board Members Absent: Councillor Kym Hutcheon, Councillor, Brockton

Others Present: Paul Allen, Councillor, Municipality of Grey Highlands

Stephan Labelle, SMART Manager Catherine McKay, Recording Secretary

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:28 p.m.

2. Election of President and Vice-President

The Manager called for nominations for President. Warren Dickert nominated Ed McGugan, noting his four years of experience on the Board including participating in the Level of Service review and the manager recruitment. Cheryl Grace seconded the nomination which was accepted by Ed McGugan. The Manager called for further nominations, and there being none, Ed McGugan was declared President by acclamation.

The Manager called for nominations for Vice-President. Scott Mackey nominated Warren Dickert who thanked Scott Mackey for the nomination but declined adding that since he is Past President, he will still be active at the executive level.

The Manager called for further nominations and Warren Dickert nominated Doug Townsend, noting his management experience and transportation knowledge. Scott Mackey seconded the nomination which was accepted by Doug Townsend. The Manager called for further nominations, and there being none, Doug Townsend was declared Vice-President by acclamation.

The Chair was assumed by Ed McGugan who welcomed everyone noting that the Board and Management is a team dedicated to the community and to providing a way for people with disabilities in Grey Bruce to access life.

3. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and Declaration of Conflict of Interest

None declared.

4. Approval of the Agenda

Motion #2023-001

Moved by Scott Mackey; Seconded by Monica Singh-Soares That the agenda for February 3, 2023 be accepted as circulated.

Carried

5. Delegations

There were no delegations.

6. Minutes of Previous Meeting – October 28, 2022

Those present introduced themselves providing details of their backgrounds and the reasons for their interest in SMART.

Motion #2023-002

Moved by Warren Dickert; Seconded by Scott Mackey That the minutes of the October 28, 2022 General Board Meeting be accepted as circulated. Carried

7. Business Arising from the Minutes

A. Open Board Meetings Policy

This policy was deferred to a future meeting.

8. New Business

A. Budget 2023

The Manager reviewed the 2023 budget noting that adjustments had been in user fees (a \$68,000 increase), insurance, computer system and NOVUS, as well as in fuel which is up \$10,000 compared to 2021. He reviewed the Projected Cash Flow showing an increase of \$12,732 in municipal contributions, including Grey Highlands contributions for a full year. The projected cash flow shows the gas tax at \$798,354.57, \$420,000 more than projected earlier.

Board member comments and questions on the budget covered the following points:

- It was not necessary to use the Line of Credit due to the \$787,371.18 gas tax balance as of January 23, 2023, which has been confirmed by Chris Walker, Director of Corporate Services/Treasurer for the Town of Hanover.
- The budget shows an increase in rides but a decrease in user fees. The Manager clarified that the amount for user fees should be \$350,000 rather than \$355,000.
- The budget includes an inflationary increase for rides only, not for user fees which were last increased in December 2021. Scott Mackey suggested that user fees should be increased annually equal to at least the rate of inflation and the fares are very reasonable compared to the alternatives.
- The Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) pays for some rides for some clients and the Manager agreed to check with the Accounts Receivable staff for details. Monica Singh-Soares offered to see what there in in the way of subsidy support for clients of Peel Region's TransHelp program.
- Saugeen Shores increased user fees for 2023 by 5.25% and in the past has kept increases at the rate of inflation. Salary adjustments of the municipal partners and the comparative average of fees and rate changes might provide guidance for SMART.
- The SMART ser fee is \$7.50 and then \$0.55/km, plus a charge of \$2.50 per extra stop and \$22.00 per hour where the trip is deemed to be 'chartered' for their exclusive use. The Manager noted that to break even, SMART would have to charge \$0.72 km. "Deadheads" (trips without paying clients) work against the organization since the cost of a driver and gas for such trips are not covered but such a trip is often required to get to the client.
- With respect to school transportation, SMART transports some students in wheelchairs to and from school. The President explained that SMART received requests from school boards to transport disabled student and the price was advantageous.
- The President noted that over the years, there have been many different proposals on fees. The Board must ensure that SMART is viable and the issue of level of service and fees are tough calls. In the past, both fees and service have been reduced but it is important to find the right solution in balancing cost and service.

- Scott Mackey suggested that the breakeven point of \$0.72/km is a fair price for a point-to-point service and he would like more information on the issue. Municipal budgets will be challenging in the next few years and SMART has to be sustainable for Councils to support it. It is an uphill battle in Chatsworth, especially if only a few people are using the service at a relatively high cost. He suggested that a fee at the breakeven point would be cheaper than a taxi or Voyago and is worth considering. The Manager will update his information on the breakeven point and present it to the next meeting.
- The Manager confirmed that no changes are required to the 2023 invoices sent to the municipalities.
- It was clarified that Councillor Allen attends as an observer and is not a voting member since Grey Highlands does not have a partnership agreement with SMART.

The manager proposed that he redraft the budget and present it for acceptance by the Board at its next meeting.

Motion #2023-003

Moved by Scott Mackey; seconded by Warren Dickert

That the Manager prepare a report to the Board with projections showing the impact of a user fee of \$0.72 or a 5% increase.

Carried

B. Annual Wage and Salary Review for 2023

The President asked for Board Members' thoughts and procedures of their municipalities. Saugeen Shores recommendation for 2023 was a 3.56% increase which was the average of 23 municipalities in Grey Bruce ranging from 1.9% to 6.9%. Cheryl Grace sent the information to the Manager but advised that it should be checked for accuracy since it dates from the end of November 2022. The Town of Hanover increase for unionized staff was 1.9% and 3% for non-union staff and the Town of Chatsworth is still in its budget process. Waiting for information might result in retroactive pay increases but this has been done in the past without any issues.

A rate that is based on the average of the municipalities will affect the budget which was based on an increase of 1.9%. It was suggested that the Board should anticipate an increase in the range of 2.5% - 3.5% and Grey County is in this range. Inflation is about 6.5% is not realistic as an increase.

The Manager is to gather the information regarding the municipal increases.

C. Pay Scale Office Administrator

There are several positions in the organization where the pay increases after a certain number of years of service. The Manager will speak to the partner municipalities to gather information about their practices and suggested the matter be deferred to a future meeting. The President acknowledged the experience of the current Office Administrator as an asset to SMART. Scott Mackey noted that almost every pay scale rises to the job rate of the position in about five to seven steps and once an incumbent reached the top level, they "max out" and then receive only "cost of living increases", which is how public sector compensation is administered. Warren Dickert agreed noting that once a person reaches the top of the salary scale, they receive only annual pay scale adjustments unless there are responsibilities added to the job, when it would be appropriate to review the pay.

D. Masks

The government mandate ended last year and masks are no longer mandated. In October, the province recommended wearing masks and so in November, a directive was placed on the SMART web site that clients are to wear masks. Drivers indicated that they wanted to more broadly enforce the directive and so the Manager checked with SMART's legal counsel who advised that it is

preferable to have Board approval. Consequently, the Manager requested that the Board adopt a requirement that clients wear masks while in vehicles.

Warren Dickert supported the wearing of masks without a mandate and questioned whether rides would be refused to those not wearing masks and would drivers be disciplined for not requiring clients to wear masks. He said that if SMART wishes to adopt such a directive, it has to be prepared to enforce it. The Manager advised that it is up to staff whether to wear masks. The President said that if either party requests the other party to wear a mask, they should be required to do so and he believes that if a client asks a driver to wear a mask, the driver should be obligated to do so. He noted that SMART transports vulnerable people and should take the same approach as medical institutions, although that approach might not be enforceable. Scott Mackey said that it is a difficult subject and there is not a lot of mask wearing in Grey Bruce these days, but it would not be prudent to go against provincial advice. He suggested that the Manager contact other similar transit organizations to determine their practices. Monica Singh-Soares pointed out that there are people who want to wear makes and those who are not able to and she would recommend that masks not be mandated. Cheryl Grace added that it would be nice for drivers to provide guidelines but it is difficult to impose them and so it would be best to go with the provincial guidelines and provide guidance to drivers about how to deal with situations involving non-compliance.

The Manager will collect information about other transit organizations" practices.

E. Grey Transit Route Contract

The GTR proposed modifications to its contract with SMART, including issues such as having service restored within 90 minutes of a breakdown, and if service is more than 5 minutes late, it is considered to be behind schedule, and if it is 15 minutes late, it is considered to be a missed trip. Some of these requirements are too prescriptive and might be difficult to abide by since the five minute requirement, for example, could not necessarily be adhered to 100% of the time depending on how long it takes the client to get to the vehicle or answer the door.

The contract provides GTR customers with accessible transportation through SMART and Warren Dickert provided background information, noting that the GTR approached SMART asking for help in meeting its goals as a regional wide service. Working with the GTR was an opportunity to showcase SMART's service and at the same time, help the GTR. The first contract was fairly open and easier to manage, but was then revised and SMART is not set up to meet all the needs of the GTR as demonstrated by the changes they proposed to the contract. SMART might struggle to meet their needs to its detriment, and in such a case, should perhaps not proceed with the contract.

Scott Mackey agreed, noting that SMART was doing a favour for Grey County because it could not meet the accessibility requirements. He would like to see SMART help the GTR but on its terms and the arrangement has to be workable. He suggested removing the troublesome requirements and then see where GTR stands on the issues.

Motion #2023-004

Moved by Cheryl Grace; seconded by Scott Mackey

That the Manager be authorized to submit contract changes to the GTR and report back to the Board. **Carried**

F. Canadian Urban Transit Research & Innovation Consortium

This item was deferred.

G. Strategic Plan

The President noted that the current strategic plan was done early in the previous Board's term, and there are issues as to what SMART should be doing. He believes that some of the ideas put forward

have been radical and risky, but there is enough in the current plan to allow the development of a list of priorities. Discussion ensued on the value of a strategic plan and it was agreed that it needs time and consideration. Since there are a lot of new Board members, it would be advantageous to have a day within the next six weeks for an in depth review of the plan, including a consideration of what SMART would like the municipalities to contribute and to share history. Scott Mackey said a 24/7 service would be ideal but is not doable and the Board should focus on where SMART is going.

Warren Dickert provided some background, noting that the strategic plan was done in 2019 for the first time and a lot has changed since. He suggested it is important to share experiences, including what transpired during Covid, the hiring of a new manager, setting of new priorities, and a focus on donations. He added that developing a succinct strategic plan is necessary to give clear direction to the Manager and time should be set aside to do that properly.

Jennifer Christie-Shaw agreed, adding that goals and metrics seem to be missing from the plan and it would be a great time to celebrate what has been done so far. SMART should define what it wants to look like and be, along with different scenarios including with and without municipal funding. It is risky to rely on municipal funding and options should be identified as a form of "future proofing". Monica Singh-Soares agreed that it would benefit SMART to dive into the strategic plan, although goals are needed and a case analysis framework would be helpful. It is important to keep what is working and do a comparative analysis.

The President said that time dedicated to the strategic plan would be beneficial especially for new members, who might also appreciate a tour, including viewing vehicles so as to appreciate SMART's unique situation.

Scott Mackey proposed spending a full day from 10 am to 3 pm for example, given that Board members are coming from all over Grey Bruce. He added that the Manager can bring forward information to illustrate SMART's business including issues such as the various purposes of trips, how Long Term Care Homes use the service, how the costing is done, ridership statistics, and so on. He said it would be a good refresh for all involved and the morning would be devoted to what the service is, followed by lunch, with the afternoon session to focus on a refresh of the strategic plan.

The Manager was directed to organize the session on the strategic plan.

H. Resident or Taxpayer on SMART Website

The SMART policy says that service is to be provided to users who are "property tax payers" but the website says "resident". He asked the Board to authorize removing "taxpayer" and replacing it with "resident". Scott Mackey described the situation of a taxpayer in Chatsworth who went to live in a long term care facility in Owen Sound and uses SMART to attend family functions. If "taxpayer" were replaced with "resident", this person would not be eligible for the service because he is not a "resident" of Chatsworth. Cheryl Grace suggested using "resident or taxpayer" and Scott Mackey aid that there should be a limit so that someone who lives in Montreal for example but owns property in one of the municipalities could not get service. Warren Dickert clarified that there is a 20 km radius limit, and the manager should create a policy to preclude the situation raised by Scott Mackey. He agreed that "taxpayer or resident" should be used. The Manager clarified that when clients sign up on line, they enter details of their residence which is confirmed by SMART.

Motion #2023-005

Moved by Doug Townsend; seconded by Warren Dickert

That both the SMART website and the Individual User Fees policy be modified to read "Service will be provided to any qualified user who is a property taxpayer or resident in a member municipality and who resides within 20 km of the SMART membership area."

Carried

I. Participation in Ontario Transportation Expo (Toronto) – 16 – 19 April 2023

The Manager noted that this event would be a good networking opportunity to speak to OEMs (original equipment manufacturers). He suggested going next year if the Board felt it is not within budget. Scott Mackey suggested that this is a new budget year and the manager should decide which would be the most effective option for him. Cheryl Grace and Monica Singh-Soares supported attendance at the event.

9. Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

10. Reports and Recommendations

A. Report on October, November and December 2022 Operations

The Manager reviewed the report, and there were questions about Grey Highlands ridership. From May 1 – December 31, 2022 there were 157 rides, 16 from Grey Highlands. A total of 4,193 kilometers were billed for generating fees of \$3,812. There are 22 registered clients in Grey Highlands with 16 active.

The source data for the "Driver Data" report is the NOVUS system and that deadheading contributes to these numbers appearing as they do, along with trips for medical appointments to places such as London, Burlington, and Mississauga. Some drivers only want to drive locally or drive only a small number of hours. Warren Dickert suggested firming up driver expectations and that being receptive to driver preferences is difficult when a driver has a SMART vehicle parked at his or her home but only wants to work a few days a week. He suggested that this be discussed at the strategic planning session.

Warren Dickert also asked about the variation shown in the Weekly Hours Worked report. The Manager said that it depends on the number of drivers available, and if there are more rides, drivers might make themselves available. The report shows driver hours available rather than vehicle hours which highlights an opportunity regarding the capital investment in vehicles. The manager explained that Wednesday is the busiest day of the week and there are gaps during the day since most rides are between 7.30 - 9:00 a.m. and 2:30 - 5 pm. and many clients are attending programs during the gap between 9:00 a.m. and 2:30. The Manager explained that this data comes out of the NOVUS booking system and the accounting system which do not talk to each other. There can be discrepancies between booked hours versus real hours as a result of cancellations, and 20% of rides are in fact cancelled. He added that the most accurate information is in the accounting system.

The Manager confirmed that he and the new dispatcher have been trained on NOVUS which has helped, but does not change the data. Warren Dickert suggested that SMART should be able to capitalize more on the data in the system to better utilize its capabilities.

Motion #2023-006

Moved by Jennifer Christie-Shaw; seconded by Warren Dickert That the Board approve Report SL2022-1031 October, November and December 2022 Operational report as presented.

Carried

11. Committee Reports

There were no Committee Reports.

The Board discussed the situation of Grey Highlands which is on a trial arrangement to May 1, 2023. If it wishes to leave the arrangement, it should have already submitted a letter to that effect based on the agreement. Warren Dickert noted that the trial was to have been or one year and that the contracts should be aligned to end at the end of 2023. If Grey Highlands wants to continue beyond the end of 2023, then it

would have to enter into a partnership agreement, like the other municipalities. The Manager explained that the fees were prorated to May 1, 2023 using the same formula as for the other municipalities. Paul Allen explained that the Grey Highlands CAO has given provisional approval for a contribution of \$23,432. Scott Mackey said that it would be a positive move to have Grey Highlands as a voting member of SMART, which could be a step towards a unified service across Grey Bruce.

12. Closed Session

There were no items for a closed session.

13. Adjournment & Upcoming Meeting Dates

It was clarified that Board members do not need permission from their Council to attend SMART sessions and Scott Mackey said that the usual process is that Councillors attend meetings of the committees and Boards that they have been assigned to and submit their per diem expenses. Board Members generally brief their Councils on SMART activities.

Motion #2023-007

Moved by Scott Mackey; seconded by Cheryl Grace

That the Board hold a strategic planning session on Friday, March 24, 2023 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. including lunch, to be followed at 2:00 p.m. by a regular monthly Board meeting.

Carried

Upcoming Meeting Dates

Friday, February 24, 2023, 1:30 p.m. via Zoom (Regular Monthly Board Meeting)
Friday, March 24, 2023, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.. (Strategic Planning Session) to be followed by the Regular Monthly Board Meeting at 2:00 p.m.

Motion

Moved by Monica Singh-Soares; Seconded by Warren Dickert That the Board of Directors of SMART adjourn at 4:03 p.m.

Carried

Ed McGugan, President

Catherine McKay, Recording Secretary

Saugeen Mobility And Regional Transit

PROPOSED 2023 BUDGET - 7% INCREASE

Individual Rides		BUDGET 2019	BUDGET 2020	BUDGET 2021	BUDGET 2022	BUDGET 2023
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NET OPERATING SURPLUS (DEFICIT) -\$ 700,000.00 -\$ 500,000.00 -\$ 504,523.00 -\$ 559,016.61	NET EXPENSES	\$ 1,760,500.00	\$ 1,736,000.00	\$ 1,400,000.00	\$ 1,582,684.00	\$ 1,716,224.00
	NET OPERATING SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	-\$ 700,000.00	-600000	-\$ 500,000.00	-\$ 504,523.00	-\$ 559,016.61

2023 PROJECTED CASH-FLOW - 7%

OPERATIONAL REVENUE SOURCES

Municipal Contributions	\$ 753,707.39
User Fees	\$ 385,000.00
Donations	\$ 7,000.00
Other	\$ 2,500.00
School Transportation	\$ 9,000.00

TOTAL OPERATIONAL REVENUE \$ 1,157,207.39

OPERATIONAL EXPENSES \$ 1,716,224.00

OPERATIONAL DEFICIT (SURPLUS) \$ 559,016.61

CAPITAL INVESTMENTS

Vehicle purchase (1 x 9 passenger

bus) \$ 150,000.00 Office and IT upgrade \$ 10,000.00

TOTAL CAPITAL INVESTMENTS \$ 160,000.00

TOTAL OPERATIONAL DEFICIT AND CAPITAL INVESTMENTS \$ 719,016.61

 JAN 27, 2023 MTO GAS TAX FUND BALANCE
 \$ 787,371.18

 Projected 2023 Provincial Gas Tax Funding
 \$ 760,000.00

 Projected start of 2024
 \$ 828,354.57

REPORT TO: SAUGEEN MOBILITY & REGIONAL TRANSIT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

FROM: STEPHAN LABELLE, MANAGER

DATE: JANUARY 27, 2023

REPORT: SL2022-1031

SUBJECT: OCTOBER, NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 2022 OPERATIONAL REPORT

REPORT:

Attached please find the following October, 2022 report on ridership:

Ridership Statistics

October 2022 saw 2118 rides with \$35,538.45 in user fees. This is an increase of 8% in rides and 21% in fees compared to October 2021. It also shows an increase of 22% in billed kilometers compared to the same period last year.

November 2022 saw 2110 rides with \$34,022.20 in user fees. This is an increase of 7% in rides and 10% in fees compared to November 2021. It also shows an increase of 5% in billed kilometers compared to the same period last year.

December 2022 saw 1857 rides with \$25,036.75 in user fees. This is a decrease of 4% in rides and 7% in fees compared to December 2021. It also shows a decrease of 10% in billed kilometers compared to the same period last year.

As can be seen from the PPT slide, and when compared to previous years, October and November numbers are going up, while December numbers show a slight decrease. We are returning (gradually) to pre-pandemic operations.

There were no incidents involving vehicles or drivers during this period.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the board approve Report SL2022-1031 October, November and December 2022 Operational Report as presented.

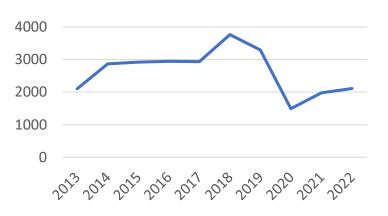
Respectfully submitted,

//signed//

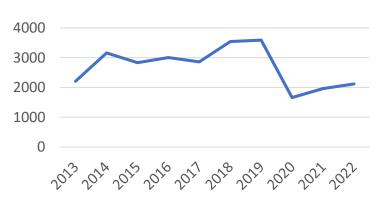
Stephan Labelle Manager

RIDERSHIP

November 2022



October 2022



December 2022

