

SAUGEEN MOBILITY

and REGIONAL TRANSIT

GENERAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Friday, December 22, 2023, 10:00 a.m.

Boardroom, 603 Bruce Rd 19, Walkerton, ON & via Zoom

Board Members Present: Ed McGugan, Councillor, Huron-Kinloss, President
Warren Dickert, Deputy Mayor, Hanover, Past President
Diane Huber, Councillor, Saugeen Shores (for Cheryl Grace)
Kym Hutcheon, Councillor, Brockton
Doug Kennedy, Councillor, Kincardine (to 12:15 p.m., via Zoom)
Joel Loughhead, Councillor, Grey Highlands (9:55 a.m. – noon, via Zoom)
Scott Mackey, Mayor, Chatsworth
Jennifer Shaw, Deputy Mayor, Arran-Elderslie
Monica Singh-Soares, Councillor, Southgate (at 11:00 a.m., via Zoom)
Doug Townsend, Councillor, West Grey, Vice President (via Zoom)

Board Members Absent: None

Others Present: Stephan Labelle, SMART Manager
Catherine McKay, Recording Secretary

- 1. Call to Order**
The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m.
- 2. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and Declaration of Conflict of Interest**
None declared.
- 3. Approval of the Agenda**
Motion Moved by Jennifer Shaw; Seconded by Warren Dickert
That the agenda be amended to add item 7A *2024 Budget Update* and that the agenda be accepted as so amended.
Carried
- 4. Delegations**
There were no delegations.
- 5. Minutes of Previous Meeting – November 17, 2023**
Motion Moved by Scott Mackey; Seconded by Warren Dickert
That the minutes from November 17, 2023 be accepted as circulated.
Carried
- 6. Business Arising from the Minutes**
 - A. Ontario Not for Profit Corporations Act (ONCA)**
The Manager provided an overview of this legislation which has been in force since October 19, 2021 and the implications to SMART.

Motion Moved by Kym Hutcheon; Seconded by Jennifer Shaw
That the information on the Ontario Not for Profit Corporations Act be accepted as presented.
Carried
 - B. Decreased Contribution for the Pilot Project - Chatsworth**
The Manager informed the Board that he sent a letter to Mayor Mackey confirming a \$15,000 contribution from Chatsworth for 2024, a rate of \$1.09 per kilometre and an \$8.00 minimum fee per trip, effective April 1, 2024.

Chatsworth clients will be informed by letter, and information about the Chatsworth rates will be added to SMART's web site. The Manager and Chatsworth's Chief Administrator Officer will discuss the details of the agreement, including an adjusted contribution for 2024. Scott Mackey expressed Chatsworth Council's appreciation for the flexibility to reduce its contribution and maintain the service in the face of financial pressures. Chatsworth will not provide notice of its intention to leave the SMART partnership for 2024.

Motion Moved by Warren Dickert; Seconded by Doug Townsend

That the Manager implement the rates for a contribution from Chatsworth of \$15,000 and send a letter to Chatsworth clients informing them of the new rate before January 1, 2024.

Carried

7. New Business

A. 2024 Budget Update

The draft budget circulated to Board members showed the Chatsworth changes effective April 1, 2024, which will result in an increase of \$8,170 in user fees is using 2022 ridership numbers. Various options for the 2024 budget were discussed including "bad debts", membership fees in the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) and the Ontario Public Transit Association (OPTA) and the fee to Hanover for managing the gas tax funds.

An increase in fees from the current \$2.00 plus \$0.55 per kilometre subject to a minimum charge of \$7.50 per ride was discussed. An increase from \$0.55 to \$1.00 would generate \$167,000 in revenue assuming no change in rides. The \$2.00 fee is historic and has been considered a basic flat rate component for a long time. An increase in the rate will likely lead to a decrease in ridership, which in turn will decrease the gas tax. SMART should be prepared for this eventuality and make up the shortfall by taking a businesslike approach and increasing in rates to ensure sustainability. It was suggested that Councils be informed about the relationship between municipal contributions and ridership, and that increased ridership will lead to increased contributions. Gearing rates to income would not be administratively feasible and discussion on various rates ensued, with the President suggesting that the Board should first consider a rate increase, and then take into account the impact on contributions. Seventy-two per cent of SMART's clients are over 65 years of age and such an increase would result in decreased rides and thus decreased gas tax. Any increase in the user fee requires three months' notice to clients. The Manager is to prepare budget scenarios based on a user rate of \$0.70 per kilometre with municipal contributions remaining at the 2023 level to maintain a reserve. He is also to calculate the anticipated reduction in rides resulting from the user fee increase.

Motion Moved by Scott Mackey; Seconded by Kym Hutcheon

That the Manager prepare a budget based on a rate of \$0.85 per kilometre.

Defeated

Motion Moved by Warren Dickert; Seconded by Scott Mackey

That the Manager prepare a budget based on a rate of \$0.70 per kilometre.

Carried

8. Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

9. Reports and Recommendations

A. Report on November 2023 Operations

The report showed 2,425 rides, 42,591 billed kilometers in November, and \$40,061.02 in user fees, an increase of 15% in rides, 18% in fees and 13% in billed kilometers compared to the same period last year. The Manager continues to work with the TripSpark database to create a deadhead report.

The Board discussed various ways to address the deadhead issue, including assigning vehicles and drivers to sections within SMART's geographical area and ensuring as many riders as possible on a trip. The Manager

noted that SMART already has measures in place to have as many riders as possible on a trip and he agreed to further explore the issue of centralizing vehicle storage. The number of non-medical rides arose and it was pointed out that the 2021 client survey showed that 75% of rides were for medical purposes and 44% for recreational purposes. (Some clients take SMART for multiple purposes.) The President noted that better data is required before considering policy changes to address the issue of deadhead costs.

Motion Moved by Scott Mackey; seconded by Warren Dickert

That the Manager be directed to present a report to the Board in the first quarter of 2024 on fleet redeployment, including the implications of reducing the fleet by 25%, and storing vehicles in central locations within SMART's geographical area.

Carried

10. Committee Reports

A. Strategic Planning Committee

Jennifer Shaw made a presentation on the Strategic Plan, reviewing the work to date, an internal analysis of strengths and weaknesses, an external analysis of opportunities and threats, a summary of feedback from staff on the plan, and demographic information. The exercise resulted in a revised vision: improving quality of life through mobility, and a revised mission: SMART provides residents of Grey Bruce member municipalities with client-centred, assisted transit. Strategic priorities and outcomes for 2023 – 2026 were identified and goals and metrics were set out for each of the outcomes. Next steps include a review of the strategic priorities and goals. Finally, the presentation reviewed the results of a client survey consisting of 76 responses which showed that more than 70% of SMART clients are 65 years of age and older, the primary reasons for travelling with SMART are to go to medical appointments, for social/recreation reasons and shopping. More than 80% of respondents were pleased overall with SMART. The strategic plan will be considered at the Board's January meeting to set priorities for 2024 and for the next three to four years. She asked that Board members email her any ideas they would like to have considered. The President thanked Jennifer Shaw for her work on the strategic plan.

11. Closed Session

There were no items for a closed session.

12. Strategic Planning Session

This item was covered in 10 A. above.

13. Adjournment & Upcoming Meeting Dates

Upcoming Meeting Dates

Friday, January 26, 2024, 10:00 a.m. Regular Monthly Board Meeting, SMART Office, 603 Bruce Rd 19, Walkerton, ON

Motion Moved by Diane Huber; Seconded by Monica Singh-Soares

That the Board of Directors of SMART adjourn at 12:45 p.m.

Carried



Ed McGugan, President



Catherine McKay, Recording Secretary