

# **SAUGEEN MOBILITY**

## **and REGIONAL TRANSIT**

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### **GENERAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

Friday, March 22, 2024, 10:00 a.m.

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

**Board Members Present:** Ed McGugan, Councillor, Huron-Kinloss, Chair  
Warren Dickert, Deputy Mayor, Hanover, Past Chair (via Zoom)  
Cheryl Grace, Councillor, Saugeen Shores (via Zoom)  
Kym Hutcheon, Councillor, Brockton  
Doug Kennedy, Councillor, Kincardine (via Zoom)  
Joel Loughead, Councillor, Grey Highlands (via Zoom at 10:15)  
Scott Mackey, Mayor, Chatsworth  
Monica Singh-Soares, Councillor, Southgate (via Zoom)

**Board Members Absent:** Doug Townsend, Councillor, West Grey, Vice Chair  
Jennifer Shaw, Deputy Mayor, Arran-Elderslie

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

**Guests:** Kelsey Wepler, BDO Canada

**1. Call to Order**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.. At various times during the meeting, Zoom connections were disrupted; however, there was a quorum at all times.

**2. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

None declared.

**3. Approval of the Agenda**

**Motion** Moved by Monica Singh-Soares; Seconded by Cheryl Grace

That the agenda be accepted as presented.

**Carried**

**4. Delegation**

The Board received a delegation from Kelsey Wepler of BDO Canada, who conducted the 2023 audit. Ms. Wepler noted that the financial statements provide a clear opinion and she reviewed the statements. She explained that the gas tax reserve does not appear on SMART's balance sheet, because the Town of Hanover receives the funds as the intermediary and it transfers money to SMART based on operational needs. The gas tax is accounted for as Town of Hanover funds and earns interest which is put back into the reserve account. It was suggested that the gas tax should be transferred to SMART earlier to avoid a deficit and to cover the interest on its line of credit. The Chair noted that work is underway on a yearly schedule to address issues including capital asset planning and the financial structure in June of each year. This work could include the question of using gas tax funds to avoid a year end deficit. Ms. Wepler reviewed the management letter which highlights the same three areas noted in the past, including EFT bill payments. BDO tested all EFTs during the audit and found no issues. The bank reconciliation was out by a few dollars. Ms. Wepler thanked SMART for its cooperation during the audit.

**Motion #2023-017**

Moved by Scott Mackey; Seconded by Kym Hutcheon

That the Board approve the 2023 Auditor's Report as presented by BDO Canada.

**Carried**

**5. Minutes of Previous Meeting – February 16, 2024**

**Motion** Moved by Monica Singh-Soares; Seconded by Cheryl Grace  
That the minutes from February 16, 2024 be accepted as circulated.  
**Carried**

**6. Business Arising from the Minutes**

**A. Discussion**

The Manager circulated a list of legal firms used by some of the partner municipalities, although it is not complete because not all municipalities replied. He had a free consultation with a Toronto lawyer who indicated that research would have to be done to clarify whether the Ontario Not for Profit Corporations Act or the Municipal Act applies to SMART, and that this would entail a fee. Cheryl Grace agreed to forward to the Manager the name of the lawyer who disbanded her law firm and has been hired by Saugeen Shores. There was discussion about requesting the Board's lawyer to do further work, although an opinion has already been provided that the Municipal Act does not apply to SMART. It was agreed that SMART should wait for the conclusion of the Ombudsman's investigation which might clarify the matter at no cost.

**Motion** Moved by Kym Hutcheon; Seconded by Scott Mackey  
That the information provided on legal firms used by the partner municipalities be received for information.  
**Carried**

**7. Correspondence**

The Manager advised the Board that correspondence had been received indicating that no legal action will arise out of the February 2022 accident, and he will not be required to attend an Examination for Discovery.

**8. New Business**

**A. Bruce Transit Study**

In January, the Manager met with Claire Dodds, Director of Planning and Development and her staff, and Stephen Musehl, Executive Director, Home and Community Support Services, to explore efficiencies with SMART. They discussed linking booking systems, although there are concerns about rides being correctly allocated, access to client information and creating dependencies on another organization. A position responsible for transit at Bruce County was not approved, although the County has a new marketing position and there is a link on the County web site to book a ride. The Manager will invite Ms. Dodds to SMART's April 26, 2024 meeting. It was noted that Stephen Musehl has moved to a new position with the Canadian Mental Health Association.

**Motion** Moved by Joel Loughead; Seconded by Monica Singh-Soares  
That the Board accept for information the report from the Manager on the Bruce Transit Study.  
**Carried**

**B. Report on Group Excursions**

The Manager reviewed the report on group rides which account for 25% of all rides. In 2023, group rides were done with the 30-passenger bus and 9-passenger vans, with 76 trips in the bus and 169 trips with vans. These outings catered to a variety of interests, including viewing Christmas lights, dining out, visiting the Hanover racetrack, and leisurely drives through the countryside. Group rides were also provided for shopping trips, including twice-weekly visits to Grant's Independent and Food Basics in Hanover, along with trips to various towns for shopping. The report showed the number of group rides for each municipality using each type of vehicle. The Manager offered additional information on the full cost of group rides, including payroll and other costs. Discussion ensued about what should be included in the other costs and whether the 30 passenger bus is the optimal size or if a smaller vehicle would serve the need. The Manager explained that it depends on the number of wheelchairs since the bus holds 14 wheelchairs and the number of wheelchairs on a group trip determines the size of the vehicle.

**Motion** Moved by Scott Mackey; Seconded by Kym Hutcheon

That the Manager meet with the Chair and the Past Chair to update the report on group rides to show the full cost and that a revised report be submitted to the Board at its next meeting.

**Carried**

**C. Hands-Free Policy**

The Manager informed the Board that information from its insurance representative and the Township of Southgate indicates that eating and drinking are not considered distracted driving.

**Motion** Moved by Scott Mackey; Seconded by Kym Hutcheon

That the Hands-Free Policy be amended to delete the first and second bullet points in paragraph 4 and replace them with the following from the Government of Ontario's policy: "Other actions such as eating, drinking, grooming, smoking, reading and reaching for objects are permitted only when they can be done safely."

**Carried**

**D. Personal Use of Saugeen Mobility Vehicles Policy**

The Manager reviewed the policy and various issues were raised about its scope and application, and the rationale for including the driver approval process and approved driver responsibilities. The Board discussed whether drivers should be able to do personal business while waiting between rides. Since they are being paid, it was suggested that they should not be doing personal business during this time as this increases the organization's risk and liability.

**Motion** Moved by Cheryl Grace; Seconded by Monica Singh-Soares

That the Chair and the Manager work together to revise the policy to provide that Saugeen Mobility vehicles are to be used for company use only and that personal use of vehicles is not permitted, and to develop a plan to notify employees of the change in policy.

**Carried**

**E. Governance Communication**

The Chair introduced the document which he drafted, noting that ideas on the matter should be forwarded to him and the Manager, and the subject is to be added to future agendas for discussion. It was noted that business should not be conducted through email. Board members can submit a Notice of Motion so that an item is added to the agenda and can be thoroughly discussed. Exchanging information through email is acceptable, but debate is not.

**Motion** Moved by Kym Hutcheon; Seconded by Scott Mackey

That Board members use email only for the exchange of information and not to advance the business of SMART.

**Carried**

**F. Doug Townsend's Statistics Spreadsheet Ongoing**

Since Doug Townsend was not present, this matter was deferred to the April meeting.

**G. OGRA (Ontario Good Roads Association)**

Warren Dickert informed the Board that the Town of Hanover has made an application on behalf of SMART to make a delegation at the OGRA conference. The issue is to ensure that funding for SMART is not based on ridership during COVID. The Town is awaiting a response to the application.

**H. March Update**

The Manager asked whether the Board wishes to receive updates via email or whether the information in the update should be in his monthly report. Points in the update were clarified, including that the staff member doing the driver assessments will be observing the drivers, making comments about their

driving and providing coaching and orientation. The Manager will try to get an internal candidate with the required licence to drive the 30 passenger bus. Driving this bus requires a C or F class driver's licence, a higher class of licence than what is required for the other vehicles.

Items h. and k. from the update were moved into the closed session.

The Manager will email drivers about eye safety during the eclipse, and information about it has been added to SMART's website. Drivers cannot drive while wearing glasses made to watch the eclipse, and it was pointed out that fake eclipse glasses that do not work are being sold.

The Manager verified with the Ministry of Transportation that there are no regulations prohibiting the provision of transportation services to individuals over 65. It would therefore be open to the Board to change the criteria for eligibility.

Data backup to the cloud takes place at the end of each day.

**Motion** Moved by Scott Mackey; Seconded by Kym Hutcheon  
That the Manager bring forward a recommendation to the Board regarding payment of a premium per trip for employees who drive the 30 passenger bus.

**Carried**

**Motion** Moved by Scott Mackey; Seconded by Warren Dickert  
That the March Update be received for information.

**Carried**

#### **I. Use of SMART Bus for Huron Kinloss**

The Chair explained that this relates to the Spring Road Tour in Huron Kinloss where Council travels to assess the condition of roads. A request made to SMART staff to book the bus for this purpose was denied since most of the participants do not fall under SMART's eligibility criteria. The Chair noted that previous transportation providers have not delivered the same level of service as SMART and to allow the Chair to participate in the tour, it was suggested that a SMART vehicle could be used. Discussion touched on whether SMART should offer a charter service to the general public that might provide a revenue stream, and that service not be provided outside of the SMART mandate or on the basis of favouritism. The Board decided to allow the SMART bus to be used for the Huron Kinloss Spring Road Tour.

**Motion** Moved by Scott Mackey; Seconded by Warren Dickert  
That the Manager bring forward for Board consideration a policy, including costings, that would allow SMART to provide a group charter service for those with no mobility issues.

**Carried**

#### **J. Asset Management Plan**

The Manager reviewed the plan which covers vehicles and laptops showing when they are scheduled to be replaced. The Board discussed the use of 9 passenger vans to transport two clients, and it was suggested that the need for vehicles of various sizes be reviewed to ensure that the most appropriately sized vehicle is being used given the number and mobility restrictions of the passengers. The recently purchased Promaster vehicle can handle 5 walk on clients and two wheelchairs and could prove to be more efficient. The Manager is monitoring the market for electric and hybrid vehicle, but given the cost and range, they are not practical for SMART.

**Motion** Moved by Kym Hutcheon; seconded by Cheryl Grace  
That the Asset Management Plan be received for information.

**Carried**

**9. Reports and Recommendations**

**A. Report on February 2024 Operations**

The Manager noted that rides have now risen above the 2019 level. The report showed 2,177 rides for February 2024, which generated \$31,868.65 in sales and 37,684 billed kilometers, representing an increase of 39% in rides, 42% in fees and 43% in billed kilometers compared to the same period last year. There were 37,298 kilometers driven in deadhead. While SMART is close to capacity, requests for rides can be accommodated if received in advance. If SMART cannot accommodate a client's request, they are directed to another day or time, or informed that a ride is not available. It was emphasized that client education should focus on SMART not being an "on demand" service and that there are limits on flexibility.

**Motion** Moved by Warren Dickert; seconded by Joel Loughead  
That the report on January 2024 operations be accepted as presented.

**Carried**

**10. Committee Reports**

There were no committee reports.

**11. Closed Session**

**Motion** Moved by Scott Mackey; seconded by Cheryl Grace

That the SMART Board convene in closed session at 12:50 p.m.. to discuss information explicitly supplied in confidence to the Board by Canada and an ongoing investigation respecting the Board by the Ombudsman.

**Carried**

The SMART Board reconvened in open session at 1:07 p.m. The Chair confirmed that the Board had gone in closed session and discussed matters that it is of the opinion pertain to information explicitly supplied in confidence to the Board by Canada and an ongoing investigation respecting the Board by the Ombudsman.

**13. Strategic Planning Session**

Since Jennifer Shaw was not present, this item was deferred to the next meeting.

The Board was informed of a new donation card to be made available at funeral homes to allow people to conveniently make donation to SMART. This item is to be added to the next meeting agenda.

**14. Adjournment & Upcoming Meeting Dates**

**Upcoming Meeting Dates**

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

**Motion** Moved by Kyn Hutcheon; Seconded by Scott Mackey

That the Board of Directors of SMART adjourn at 1:30 p.m.

**Carried**



Ed McGugan, Chair



Catherine McKay, Recording Secretary