

SAUGEEN MOBILITY

and REGIONAL TRANSIT

GENERAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Friday, April 26, 2024, 10:00 a.m.

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

Board Members Present: Ed McGugan, Councillor, Huron-Kinloss, Chair
Doug Townsend, Councillor, West Grey, Vice Chair (via Zoom)
Warren Dickert, Deputy Mayor, Hanover, Past Chair (via Zoom)
Kym Hutcheon, Councillor, Brockton
Doug Kennedy, Councillor, Kincardine (via Zoom)
Joel Loughhead, Councillor, Grey Highlands (via Zoom at 10:35)
Scott Mackey, Mayor, Chatsworth (via Zoom)
Jennifer Shaw, Deputy Mayor, Arran-Elderslie (via Zoom)
Monica Singh-Soares, Councillor, Southgate (via Zoom)

Board Members Absent: Cheryl Grace, Councillor, Saugeen Shores (via Zoom)

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

Guests: Claire Dodds, Director of Planning and Development, Bruce County

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting 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 Warren Dickert; Seconded by Doug Townsend

That the agenda be amended to add item *8H. Rural Transit Solutions Fund* and that the agenda be accepted as so amended.

Carried

4. Delegation

Claire Dodds, Director of Planning and Development for Bruce County made a presentation about the Bruce County Transit Demand and Feasibility Study which outlined findings, transit needs, and recommendations for action. Short term recommendations include initiating and coordinating discussion on process improvements and eligibility changes with SMART and HCSS, and eengaging with SMART to discuss opportunities for specialized transit throughout the County. Long term recommendations include continuing to work with SMART and HCSS to pursue funding to address the increasing demand for specialized transit. The question and answer session discussed RideShark, software which matches riders and drivers, similar to Uber. Uber is very effective in densely populated areas, but Grey Bruce does not offer enough population to make it profitable. The taxi licensing system is fragmented since it is municipally administered and Ms. Dodds noted that research is underway into the legislative environment regarding taxis and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario will be consulted. Multi-stakeholder solutions will be required to facilitate transit and within the next months or so, staff will have formulated a position to be presented to Council. Ms. Dodds was not able to say definitively if RideShark could be used by SMART but she will keep in touch with the Manager. The Chair thanked Ms. Dodds for her presentation and the Manager will circulate the PowerPoint to Board members.

5. Minutes of Previous Meeting – March 22, 2024

Motion Moved by Warren Dickert; Seconded by Monica Singh-Soares

That the minutes from March 22, 2024 be accepted as circulated.

Carried

6. Business Arising from the Minutes

A. Personal Use of SMART Vehicles Policy

Motion Moved by Kym Hutcheon; Seconded by Doug Townsend

That the Personal Use of SMART Vehicles Policy be approved as presented.

Carried

B. Report on 30-Passenger Bus Pay Premium

The Manager noted that the policy will be reviewed annually. The Chair advised the Board that the bus was successfully used for the Huron=Kinloss road tour.

Motion Moved by Monica Singh-Soares; Seconded by Kym Hutcheon

That the Board approve a \$1.00 per hour premium for drivers operating the 30-passenger bus.

Carried

C. Report on Group Rates

The Manager noted that the number of trips with the 9-passenger van should be changed from 169 to 203 and administration costs are included in the \$30/hour rate. The Chair said that the calculations are on the conservative side so even with the \$1.00/hour premium, the rate more than covers costs. Various issues were discussed including the sensitivity of SMART clients to price increases and the Chatsworth pilot will provide some indication of price sensitivity. Group rides are generally used by businesses which may have a different price sensitivity than individuals. Since the Chatsworth pilot began on April 1, 2024, one client expressed concern about the rate increase since the price of their ride doubled. A Director of a long term care facility indicated to a Board member that SMART's new price in Chatsworth was not exorbitant, the service still provides good value and clients continue to use it.

Motion Moved by Jennifer Shaw; Seconded by Kym Hutcheon

That the Board approve an increase in charges for the 9-passenger bus, from the current \$2.00 per kilometer and \$30.00 per hour to \$2.50 per kilometer and \$30.00 per hour and that the Board approve an increase in charges for the 30-passenger bus from the current \$3.00 per kilometer and \$30.00 per hour to \$3.50 per kilometer and \$30.00 per hour.

Carried

D. Report on 30-Passenger Bus Charter

SMART's insurer will not cover use of the 30-passenger bus to transport clients who do not meet its eligibility criteria and the Manager is looking into other options. The 9-passenger van could be used for charters, and the Manager will check with other similar services as to what the price should be. He confirmed that administration expenses have been included in the calculations and an estimate is done for each trip rather than on a per kilometre basis. A charter service is allowed under SMART's Letter Patent and would ensure that people with limitations can participate in group outings rather than being isolated in their own accessible vehicles.

Motion Moved by Scott Mackey; Seconded by Monica Singh-Soares

That the report on 30-passenger bus charter be deferred in light of the insurance issues.

Carried

7. Correspondence – Letter from Loucks & Loucks

The Manager advised the Board that Loucks & Loucks is awaiting a letter from the Ombudsman.

8. New Business

A. Maintenance Statement

The Maintenance Statement was developed based on advice from the insurer. It does not specify specific numbers such as tire tread depth, but refers to what are considered to be safe standards. SMART does not do bulk purchasing of tires for example because it is not known when they might need to be replaced, and there would be storage issues.

Motion Moved by Kym Hutcheon; Seconded by Jennifer Shaw

That the Board approve the Maintenance Statement as presented.

Carried

B. New Driver Hiring Practice

The word “policy” in the first sentence should be changed to “practice”. Discussion covered the cost of the checks in various jurisdictions, whether applicants should be reimbursed for the cost of the police check, and the implications of the Human Rights Code on the issue of job applicants with criminal convictions who have not received a pardon.

Motion Moved by Doug Townsend; Seconded by Kym Hutcheon

That the New Driver Hiring Practice be amended to require, at the applicant’s expense, a criminal record check and a vulnerable sector check as a condition of employment and that the Practice be approved as so amended.

Carried

Scott Mackey left the meeting at 11:30 a.m.

C. Notifications Software (Grant from Federal Government)

The Manager proposed acquiring this software if the federal government approves a grant to SMART. The grant would cover 80% of the \$9,600 installation cost, and there would be an additional annual licensing fee of \$5,000. The software automatically calls riders to alert them when their ride is coming which would reduce the costs of “no shows” at the door. It would also allow SMART to send out automatic phone messages to clients, whereas now it has to contact clients one at a time, since many do not have email. The Manager said that about 200 out of 1,800 SMART clients have email, and it was suggested that many more likely have it but SMART does not have their email addresses. There are savings to be had if SMART does not have to send individual letters to clients which costs about \$2,700 in labour and stamps. The software would not necessarily reduce staffing costs, but would reduce missed calls that dispatchers cannot get to and gas costs by avoiding no shows, for which there is a \$30 penalty.

The Manager will get more information about the software and prepare a report for the Board’s next meeting.

D. Grey Highlands Partnership

A new partnership agreement is required to include Grey Highlands, as was done with Chatsworth and a response on the matter is pending from Loucks & Loucks. Including Grey Highlands would allow SMART to receive the gas tax from Grey Highland rides. Also, the number of Directors in the partnership agreement needs to be changed to 10. Joel Loughead informed the Board that he has advised the Chief Administrative Office of the need for full partnership and the matter will go to Council. The Chair has had preliminary discussions with the Mayor of South Bruce and the Manager and the Chair made a presentation to the Township of Georgian Bluffs, both of which are interested in joining SMART. One agreement should be done to include all three municipalities which would be effective as of January 1, 2025. The Manager will work on the partnership agreement.

E. Donation

The Cargill District Community Foundation made a donation of \$5,000 to SMART. The cheque presentation was covered in local papers including The Post and the Walkerton Herald Times. A letter of thanks has been sent.

F. Hanover Chamber of Commerce

Membership in the Chamber costs \$180 per year which would not be of significant benefit to SMART. It was felt that membership in the various transit organizations is more useful.

Motion Moved by Warren Dickert; Seconded by Kym Hutcheon

That SMART's membership in the Hanover Chamber of Commerce not be renewed.

Carried

G. Part-time Driver

The Manager explained the need to hire a part-time driver to fill in when drivers are away on a planned absence such as vacation. Drivers who are away are not paid, but rides are missed because not enough drivers are available. The Board discussed how the vehicle would be moved to where it needed to be for the part-time driver, since the regular driver would normally keep it at their home. A driver who works three days a week would keep the vehicle at home seven days a week, which reduces SMART's capacity to deliver rides. One option to ensure a part-time driver has access to a vehicle would be to park it at the SMART office. The Manager clarified that drivers' employment agreements state that they are to be available five days per week.

Motion Moved by Kym Hutcheon; Seconded by Jennifer Shaw

That the Board approve the hiring of a part-time driver to fill in for drivers who are away on a planned absence.

Carried

H. Rural Transit Solutions Fund

A letter to the Rural Transit Solutions Fund dated April 26, 2024 and signed by the Chair was circulated to the Board confirming that the Manager and the Chair have the authority to enter into and execute the funding agreement with the Rural transit Solutions Fund.

Motion Moved by Warren Dickert; Seconded by Kym Hutcheon

That the Board approve sending the letter to the Rural Transit Solutions Fund dated April 26, 2024 and signed by the Chair.

Carried

9. Reports and Recommendations

A. Report on March 2024 Operations

The Manager noted that there were 2,050 rides, leading to \$28,792.50 in sales and 34,508 billed kilometers. This is a decrease of 0.34% in rides, an increase of 3% in fees, and an increase of 0.35% in billed kilometers compared to the same period last year. The Chair noted that work continues on gathering data to reduce deadheads. Doug Townsend suggested that drivers be asked for their suggestions as to how to reduce deadheads, since the people who do the jobs often have good ideas.

The Manager presented a letter from Huron Shores Hospice thanking SMART and its staff for the care and attention provided to a resident. The letter, with appropriate redactions, will be circulated to Board members, the municipal Councils and posted on SMART's web site. Donation cards for Huron Hospice are being printed.

Motion Moved by Warren Dickert; seconded by Doug Townsend

That the report on March 2024 operations be accepted as presented.

Carried

10. Committee Reports

There were no committee reports.

11. Closed Session

There were no items for a closed session.

12. Strategic Planning Session

Jennifer Shaw noted that she had sent the updated Strategic Plan to Board members and input was received proposing that the outline be used as a “Dashboard”. It was suggested that the plan should cover the current term of municipal councils and go back to the Board for consideration about what remains to be done on it. Jennifer Shaw will review the plan with the Chair and the Manager to determine what should be on the agenda for the next meeting with respect to the Plan.

Warren Dickert reported that a good reception was received from the provincial Minister of Transportation at the Ontario Good Roads Association’s annual conference. The Chair thanked Warren Dickert, Scott Mackey and Monica Singh-Soares for attending the conference.

The question of adding photos of Board members to the SMART web site was raised, and it was pointed out that photos are included on their municipal councils’ web sites. All SMART Directors’ names are listed on the website which was felt to be sufficient.

13. Adjournment & Upcoming Meeting Dates

Upcoming Meeting Dates

Friday, May 24, 2024, 10:00 a.m. Regular Monthly Board Meeting, SMART Office, 603 Bruce Rd 19, Walkerton, ON.

Motion Moved by Monica Singh-Soares; Seconded by Warren Dickert

That the Board of Directors of SMART adjourn at 12:27 p.m.

Carried



Ed McGugan, Chair



Catherine McKay, Recording Secretary