

SAUGEEN MOBILITY

and REGIONAL TRANSIT

GENERAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES
Friday, February 13, 2026, 10:00AM
Boardroom, 603 Bruce Rd 19, Walkerton, ON & via Zoom

Board Members Present: Kym Hutcheon, Deputy Mayor, Brockton, Chair
Ed McGugan, Councillor, Huron-Kinloss, past Chair
Doug Townsend, Councillor, West Grey
John Divinski, Councillor, Saugeen Shores
Scott Mackey, Mayor, Chatsworth
Mike Hinchberger, Councillor, Kincardine (via Zoom)
Warren Dickert, Deputy Mayor, Hanover
Jennifer Shaw, Deputy Mayor, Arran-Elderslie, Vice Chair (via Zoom)
Monica Singh-Soares, Councillor, Southgate (via Zoom)
Joel Loughhead, Councillor, Grey Highlands

Others Present: Stephan Labelle, General Manager

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

The Chair called the meeting to order at 10:01AM.

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

None declared.

3. Approval of Agenda

Motion

Motion Moved by: John Divinski; Seconded by: Doug Townsend
That the agenda be approved as presented.

Carried

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – January 9, 2026

Motion

Motion Moved by: Mike Hinchberger; Seconded by: Warren Dickert
That the minutes from January 9, 2026 be approved as presented.

Carried

5. Delegation – none

6. Business Arising from the Minutes

A. BDGW Regional Transit Study update

The Board received a verbal update on the BDGW regional transit study. The consultant continues to work on data collection, survey analysis, and stakeholder engagement. The consultant's presentation is scheduled for March 19. The board discussed the inclusion of Wellington in the study and the potential impact of fare structures. Concerns were raised about the provincial expectation for local municipalities to fund rural transit and the need for clear financial justifications.

B. Host County update

Motion

Bruce County will serve as host county for Gas Tax operations effective April 1, 2026. The Deputy Treasurer will manage interim fund administration until a permanent treasurer is appointed.

Motion Moved by: Ed McGugan; Seconded by: John Divinski

February 13th, 2026

That the Manager continue working with Bruce County to prepare for the launch of Gas Tax operations on April 1st, 2026.

Carried

C. HCSS and SMART partnership update

The Board discussed the partnership with HCSS and noted distinct operations and unique organizational structures. Subjects discussed included fare structures for accessible transit, rural transportation funding, and equity between municipalities. Legal guidance will be obtained to clarify obligations for accessible transit fares and rural service. The Board reaffirmed its preference for a partnership approach rather than amalgamation, given the differences in operations, mandates, and separate assets that distinguish the organizations.

7. Correspondence – none

8. New Business

A. Aird & Berlis legal firm

The Board discussed the need for legal advice regarding the HCSS/SMART partnership, particularly around accessible transit fares, rural service, and inter-municipal obligations.

Motion Moved by: Ed McGugan; Seconded by: Joel Lougheed

That the Manager be authorized to spend up to \$5,000 for legal advice from Aird & Berlis regarding an HCSS/SMART partnership.

Deferred until the March SMART Board meeting

B. 2026 SMART Budget

Motion Moved by: Mike Hinchberger; Seconded by: Monica Singh-Soares

That the SMART Board authorize the amended 2026 budget as presented.

Carried

C. SMART Manager title

The Board confirmed that the Manager will hold the title of General Manager going forward to reflect the scope and responsibilities of the position

Motion Moved by: Warren Dickert; Seconded by: Scott Mackey

That the Manager be referred to as General Manager.

Carried

D. South Bruce in the SMART partnership

South Bruce incorporation in the SMART Partnership was discussed, as a prorated 2026 municipal contribution. Should this motion be approved, South Bruce Mayor Mark Goetz would be joining the Board in March.

Motion Moved by: Scott Mackey; Seconded by: Ed McGugan

That South Bruce join the SMART Partnership effective March 1, 2026, and that the 2026 municipal contribution be prorated to \$10,000.

Carried

9. Reports and Recommendations

A. Report on January 2026 operations

Operational data for January 2026 was reviewed, noting 1,547 rides generating \$30,965 in revenue, with 27,004 billable kilometers and 36,185 deadhead kilometers. Southgate experienced increased ridership

compared to January 2025, despite snow days. The challenges discussed included declining ridership trends, driver recruitment and retention, fleet positioning to reduce deadhead kilometers, and service to underserved areas. Ongoing issues with school routes for JK/elementary students and caregivers was also brought up for Southgate. A potential pilot program was discussed, which could allow SMART vehicles to serve non-disabled residents under a revised mandate and capacity-priority system. The Board stressed providing a balanced, reasonable level of service rather than maximizing rides at increased municipal costs. Fare review and CPI adjustments were also noted for consideration before the September pre-budget meetings.

Motion Moved by: Monica Singh-Soares; Seconded by: Mike Hinchberger
That the report on January 2026 operations be accepted as presented.

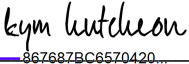
Carried

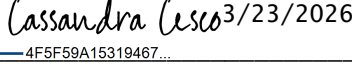
10. Closed Session – none

11. Adjournment & Upcoming Meeting Date – March 19, 2026, 12PM

Motion Moved by: Ed McGugan; Seconded by: Joel Lougheed
That the Board meeting be adjourned as of 11:19AM.

Carried

Signed by:
 3/23/2026
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Kym Hutcheon, Chair

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 3/23/2026
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Cassandra Cesco, Recording Secretary