

SAUGEEN MOBILITY

and REGIONAL TRANSIT

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March 1st 2021

To: SMART Partner Municipalities

From: Warren Dickert, President,
Mike Myatt, Past President

Dear Clerk and Members of Council:

These have been turbulent times, not only for SMART but also for municipalities. COVID 19 resulted in 75% of Saugeen Mobility and Regional Transit's drivers being laid off back in the spring and summer of 2020. SMART's office staff members were also heavily affected with reduced hours and realigned workloads. While all drivers have been brought back for at least some work, SMART is still experiencing substantial monthly ridership and user fee reductions – individual ridership early in January was still down close to 50% and group excursion ridership were still down more than 80%. These numbers are, however, a significant improvement from last spring when ridership was down about 90% (in line with all transit services).

Although SMART continues to assess improvements to efficiency, its large geographic service area coupled with the reduction in ridership, capacity limits and increased cleaning requirements makes that very challenging.

SMART's board and management have spent considerable time reviewing operations. We continue to make service level changes in an effort to decrease operating expenses while still offering an essential means of transportation for those with mobility issues.

Our board has made some very difficult decisions over the past 18 months with seven key areas being addressed.

- 1) 7 of 9 municipal partner contribution amounts have been reduced for 2021
 - a. Municipal Contributions have been reduced from \$750,000.00 to \$650,000.00
 - b. Board continues to look for efficiencies
- 2) SMART will be replenishing its fleet reserve which over the past 10 years had been reduced to ZERO
- 3) Sunday service has been eliminated and hours of operation have been changed to Monday-Friday 6am-6pm and Saturdays 7am-5pm
- 4) Live weekend dispatch has been eliminated and moved to an answering device
- 5) Our Board has contracted the services of a Human Resources professional to write a Policy and Procedures Manual
- 6) Job descriptions have been completed and we have completed a Strategic Plan

local and personal since 1977

- 7) SMART continues to explore the creation of a relationship with Bruce County transportation staff in an effort to explore partnership opportunities, where a potential partnership may align with recommendations from Bruce County's soon to be completed Transportation Master Plan.
- 8) SMART recently met with Grey County CAO and Transportation Supervisor to discuss potential partnership opportunities
- 9) SMART is exploring potential for above partnerships and we are also exploring benefits of writing a business plan that would outline how a joint transportation partnership and operation may look

Our Board's objective is to ensure that we continue to provide as high a level of service as possible while continuing to explore ways to reduce costs as deemed appropriate. Our SMART Board is also interested in pursuing partnerships at the Grey and Bruce County levels and we are interested in elevating these discussions.

Please contact the undersigned or Manager Roger Cook at 519-881-2589 if you wish further information or clarification with the contents of this letter.

Sincerely,

Warren Dickert
SMART President
Councillor, Town of Hanover

Mike Myatt
SMART Immediate Past President
Vice-Deputy Mayor, Town of Saugeen Shores