

SAUGEEN MOBILITY

and REGIONAL TRANSIT

GENERAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Friday, September 30, 2022, 1:30 p.m.

Boardroom, SMART, 603 Bruce Rd 19, Brockton, ON

Board Members Present: Councillor Beth Hamilton, Municipality of West Grey, Board Vice-President
Councillor Doug Bell, Municipality of Arran-Elderslie
Councillor Dave Cuyler, Municipality of Kincardine
Councillor Jim Frew, Township of Southgate
Councillor Dean Leifso, Municipality of Brockton
Councillor Ed McGugan, Township of Huron-Kinloss

Board Members Absent: Councillor Warren Dickert, Town of Hanover Councillor, Board President
Vice Deputy Mayor Mike Myatt, Town of Saugeen Shores, Board Past President
Mayor Scott Mackey, Township of Chatsworth

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

1. Call to Order

The Vice-President called the meeting order at 1:30 p.m.

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

None declared.

3. Approval of the Agenda

Motion #2022-054

Moved by Dean Leifso; Seconded by Ed McGugan

That the agenda for September 30, 2022 be accepted as circulated.

Carried

The Vice-Chair noted that September 30 is the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, a day to honour survivors of residential schools and the children who never returned home. She added that September 30 is also Orange Shirt Day, an indigenous-led grass roots movement intended to raise awareness of the inter-generational impacts of residential schools and to promote the concept of “Every Child Matters”. The Board then observed a minute of silence to reflect on the day.

4. Delegation

There were no delegations.

5. Minutes of Previous Meeting – July 22, 2022

Motion #2022-055

Moved by Doug Bell; Seconded by Ed McGugan

That the minutes of the July 22, 2022 General Board Meeting be accepted as circulated.

Carried

6. Business Arising from the Minutes

A. Dispatcher Recruitment

This item will be addressed under item 9H.

B. Media Relations Policy

C. Board and Employee Meetings Policy

D. Open Board Meetings Policy

The above policies were deferred to a future meeting.

E. Bruce County Update

The Manager informed the Board that he had spoken to Amanda Froese, Bruce County's Director of Transportation & Environmental Services, who stated that the County has hired a consultant, IBI, which has until September 2023 to make recommendations as to how transit should be handled in the County. SMART is to be invited to participate in discussions regarding this initiative. Dean Leifso asked if Grey County is to be consulted as well, and the Manager said that he will find out.

F. GTR Request

The Vice-President noted that amendments to the agreement had been forwarded to Charles Fitzsimmons, who was Acting Manager, and Stephanie Stewart has now returned to the position of Manager, following her maternity leave. The Manager noted that he received questions from Ms. Stewart, for example whether SMART would loan its vehicles to the GTR for its evening service, although he felt that this would not be in keeping with the purpose of SMART. Ms. Stewart is having her legal staff review the issue, but the Manager has not yet heard back.

Dave Cuyler asked for clarification as to whether the GTR was asking to also borrow SMART drivers as well as vehicles, and the Manager responded that they were not. He added that the GTR was proposing that SMART vehicles be parked where GTR drivers could pick them up, which would be inconvenient for SMART drivers. Dave Cuyler said that it is not a good idea to allow SMART vehicles to be operated by non-SMART drivers. Ed McGugan said that as a result of attending the recent staff appreciation event, he became aware of the extent of the training and experience SMART drivers have, particularly with respect to assisting people. He added that even if a driver has been trained, they need experience to be able to fully carry out the job. The Vice-Chair noted that this issue of other operators using SMART vehicles has been raised with the insurer.

G. School Board Transportation Request

The Manager noted that eight days after SMART had begun to provide transportation to a student in Mildmay, the student's parents decided to drive the student to school, and so SMART no longer provides the service. SMART transports two students in Kincardine for which it receives \$92.00 per day per student. Ed McGugan asked if the parents of the Mildmay student were unhappy with the SMART service, but the Manager said that he does not have that information.

7. New Business

A. Report on Conference Attendance

The Manager noted that the conference is not inexpensive, but is an excellent networking opportunity since representatives from the Ontario Public Transit Association (OPTA), which SMART deals with a lot, and the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) will attend. He noted that attending next year would not be an option since the conference will be held in Edmonton.

Dave Cuyler said that Scott Mackey had commented that it might be better if the conference was focused on rural transit, but agreed that it would be money well spent. The Vice-President noted that there is no rural transit association. The Manager said that there will be a meeting in Waterloo on November 24 which will include a discussion of rural transit. Ed McGugan agreed that the conference would be worthwhile, adding that it is an opportunity to learn key things and meet key people. Dean Leifso said that it is beneficial to encourage employees to do training, update their skills and develop contacts, so the conference and the meeting in Waterloo would be worthwhile. The Vice-President noted that the budget should contain an item for training and conference.

Motion #2022-056

Moved by Dean Leifso; seconded by Jim Frew

That the Board approve the participation of the SMART Manager in this conference.

Carried

B. Report on September 18 2022 Staff Appreciation Event

The Manager said the staff appreciated the event and were impressed by it. Dean Leifso noted that the Manager paid for some of the items given to the staff during the event and that the costs should come out of SMART's budget.

Motion #2022-057

Moved by Ed McGugan; seconded by Dave Cuyler

That the Manager be reimbursed for his out of pocket expenses for the Staff Appreciation Event.

Carried

8. Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

9. Reports and Recommendations

A. Report on July 2022 Operations

The Manager stated that customer requests are coming back. The information from January 1 to August 25 shows that 20% of requested rides are cancelled, which is significant. Dean Leifso suggested that this could result from a number of things including death, cancellation of appointments, and not just because the client changed their mind. He suggested that statistical comparisons should be made to years where COVID is not a factor. The information also showed that Wednesday is the busiest day which increases demands on drivers. The Manager noted that in 2019, SMART had more drivers, but also had more vehicles. Ed McGugan raised the issue of the gap in the chart showing Weekly Hours Worked and Vehicle Hours Available. The Manager noted that there will always be a gap and these two numbers are not likely to ever match. Dean Leifso noted a discrepancy for Saturday, June 13 between the vehicle hours available and the hours worked. The Manager noted that this could be because the return trip took longer. The Manager stated that if the weekly hours worked were higher than the vehicle hours available, this would indicate a problem and SMART would likely have to hire more drivers.

Dave Cuyler felt that maintenance costs are low, although the Manager stated that they will go up as the vehicles age, given the average mileage of about 250,000 kilometers.

Jim Frew noted the small number of trips per jurisdiction in Southgate, Huron-Kinloss and Grey Highlands. The Manager explained that to fully understand the reasons behind the statistics, one needs to know the details of each ride. With respect to the map showing the location of drivers, the Manager noted that it is not ideal and a few more drivers in the Saugeen Shores and Kincardine areas would be helpful, as would a few more around Grey Highlands. Ed McGugan asked if SMART should actively recruit in these areas, but the Manager noted that there are no vehicles to assign to new drivers, and although SMART does have spare vehicles, they all have high mileage.

The Board expressed its appreciation for the work the Manager has done in providing the reports.

Motion #2022-058

Moved by Dean Leifso; seconded by Ed McGugan

That the Board approve Report SL2022-07 July 2022 Operational as presented.

Carried

B. Report on August 2022 Operations

Ed McGugan asked about the two incidents of a minor nature mentioned in the report. The Manager explained that in one case, another vehicle hit a SMART vehicle and the owner provided a cheque to cover the cost of replacing the bumper that was damaged as a result. In the other incident, a piece of metal from a vehicle broke the window of a SMART bus. The owner offered to pay for the damage and once SMART has received the bill, it will forward it to the person for payment.

Motion #2022-059

Moved by Doug Bell; seconded by Dean Leifso

That the Board approve Report SL2022-08 August 2022 Operational as presented..

Carried

C. Report on January 1st to September 30th 2022 Actual Budget

The Manager noted that the number of rides is the number budgeted for the year and clarified that the report covers the period to August 31, rather than September 30. Expenses for the year are anticipated to be more than what was budgeted for various reasons including the conference expense which was not budgeted. The deficit is anticipated to be \$572,000 which will be offset by gas tax reserves. Ed McGugan asked how this period compares to 2018 or 2019, and the Manager said he can get those figures. Ed McGugan said that figures for 2020 were skewed due to COVID and create an anomaly in the historical trend.

Motion #2022-060

Moved by Ed McGugan; seconded by Jim Frew

That the Board approve Report SL2022-01 (January 1st to September 30th 2022 financial report) as presented.

Carried

D. Report on Estimated October 1st to December 31st Budget

The Manager noted that the second sentence in the report should be amended to state that the total annual number of rides will be more than what was budgeted. He acknowledged the work done in the last year by the President and Vice-President to bring the budget under control. Ed McGugan said that the situation sounds positive and looks as if SMART will be set up for future success. He suggested that things should be kept on a forward trajectory to ensure the success of the next Board. The Manager said that SMART is waiting for three new vehicles which were expected in May but are delayed due to a worldwide computer chip shortage. Ford is not releasing the vehicles and when they are ready, the vendor will notify SMART. In addition, SMART is expecting an additional vehicle to replace the one destroyed in the February 14, 2022 accident. The Manager has spoken to Chris Walker, Director of Corporate Services/Treasurer for the Town of Hanover about the shortages and will continue to monitor the situation. Dave Cuyler confirmed that issues with equipment orders are common, with some delays being increased by seven additional months. The Chair complimented the Manager on the professionalism of his reports.

Motion #2022-061

Moved by Dave Cuyler; seconded by Doug Bell

That the Board approve Report SL2022-02 (October 1st to December 31st 2022 estimated financial report) as amended.

Carried

E. Report on Vehicles to Sell

The Manager explained that vehicle 62 has been sold, even though Board approval had not been given for the sale. In response to a question from Ed McGugan, the Manager noted that the Board has not so far declined to approve a request to sell a vehicle. With respect to vehicle 105, an argument could be made to wait to see if a lift can be obtained for it, but it has 308,000 kilometers on it, and the wait may not be worthwhile. Dean Leifso added that even if a lift could be found, costs would then have to be incurred to install it. Ed McGugan said that SMART should not be keeping old equipment as it attracts vandalism and only serves as “money magnets”. The Vice-President noted that SMART’s mechanic is very good in assessing whether a vehicle should be replaced or kept for parts.

Motion #2022-062

Moved by Dean Leifso; seconded by Ed McGugan

That the Board approve the sale of vehicles 62, 121 and 105.

Carried

F. Report on Replacement Vehicle

The Manager noted that if SMART buys this vehicle, there would be no negative effect on the gas tax account. He reviewed the vehicle options, noting that drivers are not in favour of rear entry vehicles as they are awkward to use on the street and there are fewer disadvantages with side entry vehicles. Ed McGugan agreed that rear entry should be avoided in favour of side entry. The Vice-President noted that if SMART does not buy a vehicle to replace the one destroyed in the accident, it would have to return the ICIP funds used to purchase it and as a result of the accident, SMART is short one vehicle and one driver. Dave Cuyler noted that some warranty might remain on a 2019 vehicle, although the Manager explained that the proposal is to purchase a new vehicle for \$92,000 (the cost includes taxes and accessibility modifications), which would have a full five-year warranty.

Motion #2022-063

Moved by Dean Leifso; seconded by Jim Frew

That the Board approve the purchase of a new 2022 Dodge Grand Caravan with \$36,988.04 from the Gas Tax Reserve. This amount, added to the insurance's \$56K, will cover the full cost of the vehicle.

Carried

G. Report on Insurance Surplus

SMART pays approximately \$5,000 per month into a reserve held by the benefits administrator to cover the cost of dental and extended health care claims. Since there is currently a surplus in the reserve, a payment holiday is proposed. In response to a question from Ed McGugan, the Manager explained that Justin Bumstead, the insurance broker, suggested the \$7,000 level. Dean Leifso clarified that dental and extended health care is self-insured and the Manager confirmed that this is the case and if claims are less than what is in the reserve, there will be a surplus. Dean Leifso suggested that the Board would need a justification for setting the amount to remain in the reserve, as it does not know the history of claims. Ed McGugan suggested that the Board is making a decision in a vacuum and should have some detail before deciding. The Vice-President noted that she and the President meet with Mr. Bumstead once a year to review the benefits situation.

Motion #2022-064

Moved by Ed McGugan; seconded by Doug Bell

That the motion put forward in the report be amended to state that the Board approve a benefits payment holiday of five months until the current \$32,000 surplus reaches a level of \$10,000.

Carried

Motion #2022-065

Moved by Ed McGugan; seconded by Dave Cuyler

That the Board approve a benefits payment holiday of five months until the current \$32,000 surplus reaches a level of \$10,000.

Carried

H. Report on Dispatcher Position

The Board discussed the merits of a computer application versus a person to dispatch rides. Ed McGugan said that he is familiar with an application that allows customers to see where their driver is, how long it will take to pick them up, make and cancel appointments and pay their bill. If customers can pay their bills through the application, this would result in a better payment rate and less bad debt. He said the TTC uses a similar application and the issue is how much the organization

trusts the application. The Manager explained that other transit services use Tripspark, although an upgrade would be required due to server issues between the company and SMART. The Manager noted that the impact on next year's budget would be \$42,000, although he suggested that this could be somewhat offset by expenses were incurred in 2022 but which will not recur in 2023.

The Vice-President said that the use of an application would make SMART more modern and efficient, and possibly free up capacity of existing staff. She suggested a part-time dispatcher working the busiest times with existing staff doing dispatch functions during the less busy times. The Manager believes that even with an application, a dispatcher would still be required. Dean Leifso noted that an application would be convenient for customers, but customers who are not computer literate will still call in by phone. He added that wireless connections are not available in all areas served by SMART and so a full-time dispatcher is required. Ed McGugan noted that the Maitland Valley Conservation Authority, bought an application for booking campsites and it more than paid for itself. He said that an application is the way things are going, but not all customers are computer savvy, although more and more people are using computers.

The Vice-Chair noted that the subject of an application was not on the agenda and should be discussed at a future meeting. Jim Frew asked where the SMART dispatch centre is was told that it is in the office area of the SMART building. The Manager said that staff have been doing their own jobs including invoicing, accounts payable, payroll, accounting and budget while dispatching at the same time. While they have managed this, it has been stressful and far from ideal.

Motion #2022-066

Moved by Dean Leifso; seconded by Ed McGugan

That the Board approve the hiring of one full-time dispatcher to fill the currently empty position.

Carried

10. Committee Reports

There were no Committee Reports.

11. Closed Session

There were no items for a closed session.

12. Adjournment & Upcoming Meeting Dates

The Board discussed the upcoming municipal elections and the impact on the Board's composition. It was noted that Mr. Loucks, the Board's lawyer, pointed out in his letter to the Board of July 6, 2022, that Directors shall hold office until the next annual meeting of the Members and that the whole Board shall be retired at each annual meeting, but shall be eligible for re-appointment if otherwise qualified.

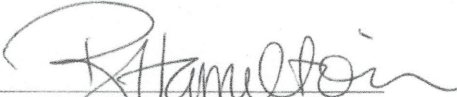
The next meeting of the Board will take place on Friday, October 28, 2022 at 1:30 p.m. in the SMART boardroom. The Vice-Chair noted that that meeting should focus on the budget and legacy work for the next Board.

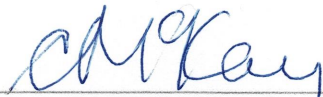
Motion

Moved by Dave Cuyler; Seconded by Dean Leifso

That the Board of Directors of SMART adjourn at 3:10 p.m.

Carried


Beth Hamilton, Vice-President


Catherine McKay, Recording Secretary

These minutes are considered to be in draft form until signed by the President and the Recording Secretary.