

SAUGEEN MOBILITY

and REGIONAL TRANSIT

GENERAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Friday, May 26, 2023, 1:30 p.m.

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

Board Members Present: Ed McGugan, Councillor, Huron-Kinloss, President
Doug Townsend, Councillor, West Grey, Vice-President
Warren Dickert, Deputy Mayor, Hanover, Past President
Cheryl Grace, Councillor, Saugeen Shores
Doug Kennedy, Councillor, Kincardine
Joel Loughead, Councillor, Grey Highlands
Scott Mackey, Mayor, Chatsworth
Jennifer Shaw, Deputy Mayor, Arran-Elderslie
Barbara Dobreen, Councillor, Southgate, for Monica Singh-Soares

Board Members Absent: Kym Hutcheon, Councillor, Brockton

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

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:31 p.m. The President, the Past President and the Manager attended in person. The remaining Board members attended via Zoom.

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

None declared.

3. Approval of the Agenda

Motion #2023-023 033

Moved by Jennifer Shaw; Seconded by Doug Townsend

That the agenda for May 26, 2023 be amended to add "Future Meeting Schedule" and that the agenda be accepted as so amended.

Carried

4. Delegations

There were no delegations.

5. Minutes of Previous Meeting – April 28, 2023

Motion #2023-024 034

Moved by Cheryl Grace; Seconded by Doug Kennedy

That the minutes of the April 28, 2023 General Board Meeting be accepted as circulated.

Carried

6. Business Arising from the Minutes

A. HCSS Collaboration

HCSS uses 10 accessible vehicles in the area served by SMART and has requested that SMART provide service to its clients when it is at maximum capacity and has no vehicles available. HCSS was asked to quantify the need, but said it is not possible as it depends on supply and demand. Their plan is to call SMART when a request comes in that they can't respond to and continue with the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). All HCSS clients served by SMART are within the member municipalities and are eligible for SMART service. HCSS is less expensive than SMART (\$10 vs. \$7.50 and a lower rate per kilometre) which is why people call them rather than

SMART. The issue was raised that HCSS is subsidized by Ontario Health, the successor of the LHIN, and any ride provided to an HCSS client increases SMART's costs. If SMART operated on a cost recovery basis, this would allay the concern of provincial subsidization of HCSS which in turn has SMART providing rides to its clients at an increased cost to SMART.

However, since HCSS clients could call SMART in the first instance, there should not be any concern about HCSS serving people who are within the member municipalities. There is a move towards one accessible transit service across Grey Bruce, and the cost to SMART is the same whether the client calls HCSS or SMART for their ride. Having SMART provide rides to HCSS clients might in fact be positive for SMART as potential new clients learn about it and it is a step towards one accessible transit service.

A question was asked about whether HCSS clients have to be approved before being able to take a ride from SMART. The Manager stated that SMART should get HCSS's client information to confirm eligibility and ensure that the correct information is available to send the invoice. There may be privacy issues with such information sharing and the funding difference between HCSS and SMART was noted, since HCSS receives provincial funds from Ontario Health. It was suggested that the MOU's terms on eligibility should be reviewed, and if HCSS eligibility criteria differ from SMART's, any required change to the MOU should be brought back to the Board for approval.

Motion #2023-026 035

Moved by Scott Mackey; Seconded by Barbara Dobreen

That the Manager review the MOU for any discrepancy between the eligibility criteria of SMART vs. HCSS and report back to the Board.

Carried

B. Municipal Act and SMART

The President informed the Board that he called Peter Loucks who reiterated his previously provided legal opinion that the Municipal Act does not apply to SMART. Mr. Loucks suggested that the Board emulate the Municipal Act by adhering to its requirements which would ensure that it is in compliance if the Act is found to apply and that it has done its due diligence.

C. GTR

GTR is a service based in Owen Sound that provides transit on fixed routes in Grey Bruce. It has asked SMART to consider filling requests it receives for accessible transit as it does not have the capacity to provide accessible rides. An MOU was drafted but has not been finalized pending information from SMART's insurer on the cost of abuse liability insurance which the GTR requires SMART to have. The matter will be deferred to the next Board meeting.

7. New Business

A. Levels of Service

The Manager presented a set of slides which had been previously distributed to Board members. The slides showed the results of his data analysis and set out the following information:

- There are 1,641 clients currently registered with Saugeen Mobility and the distribution of those clients amongst the municipalities was shown in a chart. Staff have gone through the records and removed clients who have been inactive for more than five years.
- In 2022, 771 clients generated 21,527 rides.
- The relationship between price and volume of travel shows that the higher the price, the fewer rides people generally take.
- The type of user that Saugeen Mobility mainly caters to is a transit dependent rider (as opposed to a discretionary rider) who does not have a lot of choice but to keep using accessible services if prices go up. The choices made by this type of rider are limited when prices increase.

- The types of rides taken by transit dependent riders show what would happen if transit prices increased, which is that they might choose to stop taking “discretionary” rides because of higher prices, although there would still be some rides that transit dependent riders would have to take because they have no other option.
- An increase in Saugeen Mobility transit prices would cause transit dependent riders to decrease or stop taking certain rides.
- The types of trips taken in 2019 were shown followed by a comparison of 2019 (pre-pandemic) and 2022 (post-pandemic), and lastly, a few numbers were provided for 2023.
- Board members were provided with the number of Sunday rides taken by clients in their municipality.
- Three pricing options were shown using Kincardine as an example. The first set out a revised status quo, where prices are increased to account for inflation and increases in fuel, wages and insurance costs. The second option showed the costs for an enhanced service. By way of example, an enhanced service ride for a Kincardine client where they can get service within 45 minutes, would cost \$228.85. If the cost of two vehicles were amortized over several years, the cost could also be \$1.75 per kilometer, with a minimum ride cost of \$17.50. The third option was cost recovery where the cost per kilometer is related to the price per kilometer for the operation of a vehicle.

The Board discussed various aspects of the presentation as follows:

- Providing an enhanced level of service requires hiring more drivers and purchasing more vehicles.
- The intent is to work towards a menu of services that municipalities can choose from and they do not all have to have the same level of service. Several Board members expressed the view that their Councils would be unlikely to choose the enhanced level of service due to the cost. In light of this, it was suggested that the enhanced level not be pursued and that some other method of providing the desired level of service to Kincardine should be explored through charter service, for example. Doug Kennedy suggested that Kincardine could possibly work with Saugeen Mobility on a pilot project to assess options that might work. He added that ways to reduce the cost impact need to be explored, possibly by ensuring that drivers are in the right places at the right time and reducing “deadheads” where vehicles are being driven with no paying clients. Two drivers have been hired in the last few months, and hiring efforts have targeted areas outside of Walkerton, Durham and Hanover with little success and there were no applications from Kincardine. There is one driver each in Glammis, Sauble Beach and Point Clark, and these three could provide the requested level of service to Kincardine, an area which they currently serve. One of the issues is that there is little demand for rides from 9:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m..
- The Manager clarified the cost increases noting that fuel went up from \$125,000 in 2021 to \$250,000 for 2022, and insurance costs have increased from \$60,000 to \$134,000 for 2023. Other cost increases are not as significant but if SMART does not keep up with cost increases, sudden increases will likely occur in the future in the municipal contributions.
- A menu of services with different prices for different municipalities would increase the workload of the staff, but it should be possible to manage this. Future reports are to include the feasibility regarding the capacity to integrate additional demands into the workload.
- Most of SMART’s clients are people with low incomes, seniors and those on ODSP whose incomes do not keep up with inflation and while it is reasonable to recover a portion of SMART’s costs, there should be an awareness of the client’s capacity to pay, and even a small increase in absolute terms could create a barrier to service. SMART is unlikely to turn into a business and should be mindful of the impact of price increases.

The Manager was commended for producing the data in a timely fashion and he will make presentations to municipal councils, to which he can add the information in the slide presentation. Municipalities prepare their budgets starting at the end of August in some cases, and this should be

kept in mind when the presentations are scheduled so Councils have the information in time to take it into account in the budget process. The information in the slides should also be made available to the public.

The President thanked the Manager for his work on this conceptually challenging project and the data gathering required. The use of a consultant to do further analysis was discussed. It was agreed that this is not necessary and the Manager should be allowed the time to further develop his analysis. Board members expressed a desire for sufficient time to digest the service level information and are keenly interested in the data analysis. The President confirmed that this work will continue, which might ensure that current SMART members remain in the partnership and that new members might be brought on.

Motion #2023-026 036 ^Q

Moved by Warren Dickert; Seconded by Doug Kennedy

That the Board receive for information the presentation provided by the Manager and that the issue of service levels be added to the Board's next meeting agenda.

Carried

B. 9-Passenger Vehicle

The vehicle needs transmission work which will cost \$3,000 - \$5,000 and a decision is needed whether to repair or sell it. It is a 2014 model with 254,000 kilometers on it, which is 100,000 less than comparable vehicles. Another vehicle has 390,000 kilometers and the Manager's recommendation is to repair the 2014 vehicle to replace the one with 390,00 kilometers.

Motion #2023-026 037 ^Q

Moved by Scott Mackey; Seconded by Warren Dickert

That the Board approve repairs to the 9-passenger vehicle.

Carried

8. Correspondence

The Manager informed the Board that correspondence had been received from the province regarding a potential funding source.

9. Reports and Recommendations

A. Report on April 2023 Operations

Rides are returning to the mid-2019 level, with 2046 rides and \$30,987.48 in user fees, an increase of 30% in rides and 22% in fees compared to April 2022. There was an increase of 26% in billed kilometers compared to the same period last year and a total of 250 individual clients were invoiced. The Manager noted that without more drivers and vehicles, SMART's capacity will start to plateau.

Motion #2023-030 038 ^Q

Moved by Warren Dickert; seconded by Cheryl Grace

That the Board approve Report SL2023-0519 April 2023 Operational Report as presented.

Carried

B. Report on January to April 2023 Budget

If the budget is extrapolated to the end of the year, a deficit of \$560,000 or \$585,000 will result depending on driver costs. Municipal contributions are not arriving as quickly as last year and invoices for the second portion of 2023 have been issued. Once those funds start coming in, the deficit will go down and will eventually be covered by gas tax funds. The Manager agreed to clarify the ridership numbers.

Motion #2023-031 039^R

Moved by Scott Mackey; seconded by Joel Loughead

That the Board approve Report SL2023-0519-1 January to April 2023 Budget Update as presented.

Carried

Barbara Dobreen left the meeting at 3:11 p.m.

10. Committee Reports

A. Strategic Planning Committee

The President noted that the Committee has not done any additional work since its last meeting, and will try to meet in June via Zoom to review the menu of service and other issues.

11. Closed Session

There were no items for a closed session.

12. Future Meeting Schedule

It was agreed that Friday afternoons are not the most convenient and the Manager is to survey Board members to find an alternative meeting time.

13. Adjournment & Upcoming Meeting Dates

The next meeting of the Board will take place at the call of the President.

Motion

Moved by Doug Townsend; Seconded by Doug Kennedy

That the Board of Directors of SMART adjourn at 3:19 p.m.

Carried



Ed McGugan, President



Catherine McKay, Recording Secretary