

Report SSR-CW-01-18

To: Warden Halliday and Members of Grey County Council
From: Barb Fedy, Director of Social Services
Meeting Date: December 14, 2017
Subject: **Coordinated Rural Transportation Pilot Update and Agreement Approval**
Status: Recommendation adopted by Committee as presented per Resolution CW14-18; Endorsed by County Council January 11, 2018 per Resolution CC11-18;

Recommendation

1. That **SSR-CW-01-18 regarding an update to the Coordinated Rural Transportation Pilot project and amendments to the funding agreement with Home and Community Support Services (HCSS) be received for information; and**
2. That **the Warden and Clerk be authorized to execute the Amendment #1 Funding Agreement and the License Extension Agreement with HCSS prior to County Council Approval as per Section 24.13 (b) of Procedural By-law 4876-14.**

Background

Since fall of 2016, vulnerable residents in Grey and Bruce Counties who are not served by Saugeen Mobility and Regional Transit (SMART) have been accessing transportation through the Movin'GB pilot project in and out of the City of Owen Sound and surrounding community.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the coordinated rural transportation pilot project. Report SSR-CW-04-17 was provided on June 29, 2017 as an update for the transportation pilot (Movin' GB) over the previous year. The Ministry of Transportation recognized the limitations of funding a one year pilot and further funds were allocated to the participants in the pilot for a further one year extension to March 31, 2018. An amended agreement from the Ministry was approved by Council and endorsed by County Council resolution on July 13, 2017.

This extension of this pilot required an amended funding agreement with HCSS and a software license agreement for the use of TripSpark scheduling technology. Changes

to the funding agreement include the term of the agreement, changes to the budget, changes to the timeline, and schedule of payments/funding requirements; all of which are outlined in the attached link.

Warton Connection

This past spring the project initiated an expansion into Warton for connections for those most in need and using the services of the Salvation Army. However with the development of the Bruce Peninsula Transit Company (BPT) it appeared there was duplication in serving that population. Staff from both Social Services and Home and Community Support Services met with operators of this new service. It was determined that tickets should be provided to riders in the communities the BPT served so they may access this new service. An allocation of 50 tickets was funded to Salvation Army for them to disperse with more to be provided when these are used. Those who were using the service were tracked and ridership was for medical appointments, training and other needs such as mental health appointments and food bank access and most of the tickets were utilized. Discussion took place for tickets to be provided to other community partners who work with vulnerable people that need transportation, such as Metis Nation, Legal Aid and United Way. The plan was to charge \$5.00 per ticket and track through the program to know who is accessing rides for what purpose and through what agency for reporting purposes.

Unfortunately on October 31st staff learned through social media that BPT is no longer in service as of November 1/17. Their message reported a reorganization was taking place, with hopes to reestablish in spring 2018. No funds have been allocated so there is no risk or loss due to this change. However, the steering committee will investigate a return of transportation supports to this vulnerable group.

Developing Dundalk Connection

Work has been taking place to develop a twice daily run down the Highway 10 corridor that would enable passengers to travel to and from Owen Sound to Dundalk and points in between on Mondays and Thursdays for access to appointments and social engagements as well as for shopping needs. The South East Grey Community Health Centre has been consulted for best days for this point to point route. Their programs in Markdale and Dundalk are accessed by vulnerable residents that live in those communities and also by those who live in nearby communities

Although there are limitations to this twice-a-week option, some residents will see a dramatic improvement to how they live. The opportunity to participate in social engagement and planned events is extremely important to those who are socially isolated. Programs can also be developed around the transportation route/days for maximum access.

At zero charge per ride for the first six months of this pilot, the cost is affordable compared to taxi service, of which access in rural Grey County is very limited. With a twice daily run, residents have opportunity to make the most of their access in and out of communities and can plan accordingly for appointments and additional needs such as grocery pick up. HCSS has been working with the point to point locales to develop a communication that indicates the specific stops at each point along Highway 10 and the approximate pick-up and drop-off times. However riders must call Movin'GB to confirm their seat.

Given the dialogue between health service providers in the south end of Grey County, County staff and HCSS representatives will further discuss access into Northern Dufferin County and the town of Shelburne. There are many residents whose service providers are located in that community and it could be of benefit for Highway 10 transportation options to include access into those areas as well for services that are currently not available in Dundalk. This is feasible for the route and would add additional time to the schedule but it is currently under consideration. The cost for these rides would be maintained at a reasonable amount (if at all given the pilot rides are to be free within the county) throughout the pilot duration.

Meaford and Thornbury Connections

Discussions for a point to point run east on Highway 26 have also been taking place. HCSS staff have been working with staff of Meaford regarding connecting points with their in-town transportation program. Having access to Movin'GB to get from Meaford to Owen Sound would provide additional resources to residents and the dialogue continues to connect residents into Town of Blue Mountains for opportunities to catch the Blue Mountain transportation program, for work and other purposes. These discussions are current and hope to be finalized in the coming weeks.

TripSpark and Ontario Works

Licenses and access to the scheduling technology have also been a focus for County staff. This expansion to the pilot includes Ontario Works drivers and the transportation coordinator using the scheduling program to enhance the number of riders on the existing OW vehicles. The required cell phone technology has been received, the licenses have been ordered and the agreements are in progress for signing. Training is being established for December 12-14 for staff and involves working with HCSS staff for knowledge transfer. The goal is for both Grey County Social Services and Home and Community Support to have additional booking options based on visually confirming vehicle capacity and location on any given date. The shared technology will allow more efficiency and better access for clients. The two OW vans have east and west runs, one based in the north of Grey and one based in the more southern parts of the county. Connecting the OW van with the HCSS vehicle will be considered as it becomes a logical next step. A license agreement for Ontario Works staff to use the TripSpark

scheduling technology has been received for authorization, recognizing that Grey County Social Services is bound by a collective agreement committing to a no-contract out clause. This collaboration is not in violation of this clause. The OW vans can be used to transport ODSP and OW clients from any municipality free of charge as long as the need for the transportation is normally funded by MCSS (i.e. medical, employment-related, etc.). This is because the funding for OW and ODSP comes from the same funder and the ministry makes no distinction of municipal boundaries. Should HCSS receive a call from an OW or ODSP client for transportation, HCSS staff can see the OW schedule in TripSpark, and efficiencies can be made using the most optimal schedule to meet the client's needs. ODSP staff have been advised of OW transportation services for their clients' use.

Consultant Support

Recently support from Lough Barnes has been accessed to expedite the program goals. This consultant worked closely with staff in 2014 and 2015 to examine the transportation needs of Grey County and their outcomes report was instrumental to the success of participating in the Ministry of Transportation pilot and Grey County receiving funding for the current work underway. They are very familiar with the challenges and opportunities of rural communities and have a great deal of experience in the transportation industry. The consultants have engaged with key partners of the Poverty Task Force to inquire of specific use of the proposed routes and their feasibility study includes investigation of the long term vision of those organizations to ensure sustainability of the routes. An early identified need from Bruce Grey Child and Family Services is for parents living in Meaford in need of transportation via the HWY26 corridor for visitation with their children in care. It is being considered to be accommodated with the Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday fixed routes.

Community Awareness

A communications strategy is being developed through the help of Grey County's Communications Manager and includes radio and social media campaign as well as advertisements in local newspapers. It has been deliberately low key to date as the caution has been to not create unrealistic community expectations for a long term solution to transportation.

These small improvements are logistically challenging but with a focused approach, the improvements to quality of life for residents without transportation are immeasurable.

Future Outlook

Ministry of Transportation funding ends March 31, 2018 and the steering committee will continue to develop routes, secure ridership, and raise awareness of the service, modifying where necessary. Should further funding be allocated from the Ministry of Transportation for this rural initiative, more routes and improved scheduling will continue

to be explored for better service. Without further funding from the ministry, the pilot is expected to end as of March 31, 2018 and the findings to be reported to MTO.

However, on December 1, 2017 the Ministry of Transportation announced it is releasing a new round of funding for community transportation initiatives. This new Community Transportation Grant Program – Municipal Stream (CT Program) builds on the two-year Pilot Program that was established in 2015., to fund the development of community transportation solutions to address local transportation needs, including ways to better utilize existing transportation resources. With total funding as 30 Million for a 5 year program, the maximum individual grant is \$500,000.00 for local community transportation projects and \$1.5 million for intercommunity bus projects. More work is necessary to investigate this opportunity and staff will bring forward another report in early 2018 as the deadline for submitting the full application is February 28, 2018.

Financial/Staffing/Legal/Information Technology Considerations

The HCSS funding agreement amendments include the additional allocations from the Ministry of Transportation and will cover such costs as drivers/schedulers, vehicle operations, equipment and communications. The term of the amended agreement extends to March 31, 2018 to match the duration of the extended pilot program. The first of the two additional funding allocations for the extension of the project from the Ministry of Transportation has been received. This \$25,000 allocation will be utilized for the necessary expenditures of the additional operations costs. This is in addition to the unspent funds from the previous period of \$54,039, with the final \$25,000 expected in 2018 to offset costs at that time.

The steering committee is investigating the cost of ongoing monthly operations to determine options after the March 31, 2018 program end date. There is currently a \$50,000 allocation within the 2018 Social Services budget for this pilot project and it is hoped the Ministry of Transportation will acknowledge the value of impacts to rural residents' lives. However as noted in the Future Outlook above, without committed funding from MTO, funding is limited and cannot sustain this pilot.

IT considerations are related to the interaction with HCSS staff for set up and maintenance of the technology for the Ontario Works drivers and coordinator to utilize the scheduling technology in alignment with HCSS and TripSpark licensing agreement requirements. Grey County will not manage or own the software, just the license to use the product. As noted, the license agreement has been received for approval to execute.

Legal considerations have involved vetting of the extended agreements with HCSS and the development of the amended funding agreement.

Link to Strategic Goals/Priorities

The following strategic goals and priority outcomes of the County Corporation are met as set out in the Corporate Strategic Plan.

Goal Two – Support Healthy, Connected Communities: Improve the physical, operational, and virtual connections between Grey County’s municipalities and areas beyond to strengthen communities and improve the quality of life for residents.

- (b) Improved sustainability of services and service delivery for Grey County communities.

Goal Three – Delivery Excellence in Governance and Service: Serve the needs of a large County spanning nine unique municipalities by fostering a culture of inclusive decision making and excellence in public service.

- (c) Governance model for the future
- (e) Greater operational efficiency

Attachments and Background Information

[Coordinated Rural Transportation Pilot Project Funding Amended Agreement Home and Community Support Services 2017](#)

[Trapeze \(TripSpark\) Software License Extension Agreement for Coordinated Rural Transportation Pilot Project 2017](#)

Respectfully submitted by,

Barb Fedy

Director, Social Services