

SAUGEEN MOBILITY

and REGIONAL TRANSIT

GENERAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Friday, April 28, 2023, 1:30 p.m.

Boardroom, 603 Bruce Rd 19, Walkerton, ON

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
Kym Hutcheon, Councillor, Brockton
Doug Kennedy, Councillor, Kincardine
Scott Mackey, Mayor, Chatsworth
Jennifer Christie-Shaw, Deputy Mayor, Arran-Elderslie
Monica Singh-Soares, Councillor, Southgate (via video)

Board Members Absent: None

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

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:35 p.m.

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

None declared.

3. Approval of the Agenda

Motion #2023-023

Moved by Scott Mackey; Seconded by Kym Hutcheon

That the agenda for March 24, 2023 be accepted as circulated.

Carried

4. Delegations

There were no delegations.

5. Minutes of Previous Meeting – March 24, 2023

Motion #2023-024

Moved by Warren Dickert; Seconded by Doug Townsend

That the minutes of the March 24, 2023 General Board Meeting be accepted as circulated.

Carried

6. Business Arising from the Minutes

A. Van Sale

Motion #2023-025

Moved by Warren Dickert; Seconded by Jennifer Christie-Shaw

That the four “hippo” vehicles be disposed of.

Carried

B. HCSS Collaboration

The Manager contacted Home and Community Support Services and subsequently sent information so that HCSS can estimate the service it might require from SMART. SMART is awaiting HCSS’s response.

C. Masks Policy

Motion #2023-026

Moved by Cheryl Grace; Seconded by Doug Kennedy
That the Masks policy be approved as presented.

Carried

7. New Business

A. LOS, HR, Executive Committees

The Board discussed the need for the committees it had in the past, i.e. Level of Service, Human Resources and Executive which were dissolved as of January 2023 when a new Board was formed. An Executive Committee would be beneficial to, for example, conduct the Manager's performance review, and would likely meet three times a year. The need for the Committee would be assessed annually and the Board could create additional committees if required.

Motion #2023-027

Moved by Warren Dickert; Seconded by Scott Mackey

That the Board create an Executive Committee comprised of the Board President, Vice-President and the immediate Past President and an additional member to be appointed on a rotating basis.

Carried

B. Minutes and Operational Report Documents

The Board discussed which meeting documents should be sent to Municipal Clerks. Anyone with questions about a SMART agenda item can contact their municipal representative on the Board, and so it was deemed not necessary to make meeting documents publicly available.

Motion #2023-028

Moved by Cheryl Grace; Seconded by Jennifer Christie-Shaw

That only minutes of Board meetings be sent to the Clerks of the partner municipalities.

Carried

C. Degree of Detail in Minutes

There will be one set of minutes for Board meetings to reflect the main points of discussion.

Discussion turned to whether the Municipal Act applies to SMART as a non-profit corporation with charitable status. SMART currently provides public notice of meetings through its web site, and no public concerns have arisen. Complying with the Municipal Act may impose additional obligations such as having an Integrity Commissioner and it was agreed that the issue should be examined at the Strategic Planning Committee, possibly with resources available from the municipal clerks. It was suggested that a municipal clerk be invited to a meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee to discuss the matter, since SMART does not have the expertise to determine if the Municipal Act applies. The President agreed to contact Loucks & Loucks, the law firm which provided a legal opinion on the application of the Municipal Act to obtain clarity on the matter.

D. Plans of Service

Discussion of this item is related to the work of the Strategic Planning Committee and it was thus deferred to item 10. A. Committee Reports, Strategic Planning Committee.

E. Ontario Transportation Expo

The Manager provided a verbal report on this event as follows:

"This year's Ontario Transportation Exposition sought to maximize face to face discussions between attendees as this was the first year of this event in-person."

The expo was held on April 17 to 19 and was organized by the Ontario Public Transit Association. The event was aimed at bringing together paratransit service providers, disability advocates, policymakers, and other stakeholders to discuss issues related to transit and paratransit (including rural paratransit) services, and to identify best practices in providing safe and efficient transportation for people. The conference started with an opening address by Transportation Minister Mulroney, who welcomed the attendees and highlighted the importance of transit services in enabling people to move away from less efficient modes of transportation such as cars.

Subjects of discussion during the conferences were diverse and I tried to attend the ones that would have the most impact for SMART. For example, I attended the Crisis Communication session, which had excellent tips and advice on how to deal with emergencies from a communications perspective. I can provide details separately from this meeting as there are sensitive issues.

A representative from the Ministry of Transportation confirmed that Gas Tax amounts for fiscal year 23-24 will be announced after the Fall of 2023, which may mean sometime in 2024.

I also got a few tidbits of info such as the fact that sometime later in the year, we should get information about the Permanent Transit Fund, the successor to ICIP. The Permanent Transit Fund is supposed to take effect in 2026, and could include an inflationary escalator, which would be good news for all.

I met with Susan Mills, the Transit coordinator for Huron Shores. Her service is for everybody, not just paratransit. Fares are \$2 and \$4, including trips to London. They have two accessible buses.

In summary, it was very worthwhile conference to attend. “

Discussion noted the possibility of having to replace gas tax funds if electrification becomes more widespread, but this subject was not discussed at the expo event. Electric vehicles are expensive to repair and the federal government only provides funds to buy them, rather than maintain them. Some transit services have returned to their pre-pandemic ridership levels.

8. Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

9. Reports and Recommendations

A. Report on March 2023 Operations

The Manager noted the 27% increase in rides and a 9% increase in fees over March 2023. The client database is updated every day, and when information is received that a client has passed away, the person is removed and if a period of time has passed with no contact, clients are removed. SMART has 2,300 registered users with at least 90% of the information being accurate. Efforts to update the list, such as sending out requests for up-to-dates would be costly, although clients who have not used the service in five years could be asked to re-register. Funding requests often rely on ridership, so it is in SMART's interests to ensure that its client list is accurate. It needs to know the number of clients when it is hiring and for any service changes. Some of the complexities of obtaining data for level of service decisions arise from the vast amount of data and the fact that a person can book to go five different places which counts as 5 rides and if they have an attendant, the number of rides increases. The Manager will report on the number of clients to the Strategic Planning Committee.

Motion #2023-029

Moved by Warren Dickert; seconded by Cheryl Grace

That the Manager report to the Board at its next meeting on the number of registered clients by municipality versus the number of users.

Withdrawn

Motion #2023-030

Moved by Jennifer Christie-Shaw; seconded by Doug Kennedy

That the Board approve Report SL2023-0428 March 2023 Operational Report as presented.

Carried

B. Report on Delegation to Kincardine Council's Accessibility Advisory Committee

The President thanked Doug Kennedy for his support and said that the meeting was very positive.

Doug Kennedy said the SMART representatives did an excellent job and Kincardine is very interested in expanding the service it receives.

The Strategic Planning Committee will discuss how to respond to Kincardine's request for additional service which should be available if a municipality is willing to pay for it. There are very few accessible taxi services since under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, a company cannot charge a disabled person more than a non-disabled person for a service. The level of service requested by Kincardine would require at least two additional drivers and vehicles which would be a challenge unless volunteers are used. The "deadhead" issue is complex in terms of time and costs when vehicles with no passengers go out or return from a call. A service in Kincardine might be efficient if drivers and vehicles were located in Kincardine to avoid "deadheads" and the associated costs. Analysis is required to identify alternatives and there may be other ways for Kincardine to get the requested service, including issuing a Request for Proposal. If Kincardine is requesting an additional level of service, it, rather than SMART, should perhaps be responsible for gathering the data to determine the demand for the service. One option might be to provide service in Kincardine on certain days of the week to satisfy the request for on demand service while managing the cost. The Manager noted that the busiest days of the week are Wednesday, followed by Thursday, Tuesday, Monday, Friday and Saturday. Ultimately, if "on demand" service is realistic, it should be presented to all municipalities as an available option.

Motion #2023-031

Moved by Scott Mackey; seconded by Kym Hutcheon

That the Board receive for information Report SL2023-0428 Smart Delegation to Kincardine Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Carried

10. Committee Reports

A. Strategic Planning Committee

i. SMART Tag Line Update and Logo

A draft logo was reviewed and it was decided to use the statement "empowering mobility".

Monica Singh-Soares will generate more ideas for the Strategic Planning Committee to consider and the President thanked her for her work on the logo and tag line.

ii. Social Media Policy

The President noted that the issue relates specifically to platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok and whether using them would be helpful. One of the issues is that people can comment on these platforms which can leave an organization open to criticism and attacks, although they can be useful for marketing. The Manager indicated that maintaining a Facebook page for SMART would be manageable. Jen Christie-Shaw agreed to share Arran-Elderslie's social media policy, adding that using Facebook alone would be manageable, and social media is the way to communicate these days at no cost. Having a code of conduct would lay out what can and cannot be done on it. One of the tasks in using social media is to ensure that questions are responded to promptly, although an automatic response will let people know that their message was received and will be responded to in due course. Also, the ability to comment can be limited or turned off. Videos can be a useful educational and marketing tool, but thought should be given to whether they are being used to grow a business and parameters should be in

place to decide how much growth and over what period of time. SMART's rates have not increased and it is a reasonably priced service, the alternatives are very costly, and what the municipalities are required to contribute should be mitigated through fees. Rates geared to income would not be feasible since it would be necessary to obtain and verify client incomes. Developing a social media policy is premature, and when the time comes, the Strategic Planning Committee will review the social media policies of Saugeen Shores and Arran-Elderslie.

The President reviewed his report on Menu of Services previously distributed via email which noted that the levels of service will depend on the data analysis and since municipal and SMART's budgets are annual, the ability to make changes is limited. Individual municipalities could contract for the level of service they want and agreements should contain a commitment clause. A county wide service would increase efficiency, and serve more people with a broader range of options. However, increased rides result in increased costs which could be a budget problem, but if more municipalities join, Counties might have an incentive to join.

The Strategic Planning Committee will continue working on the logo, data analysis re levels of service, and social media. Decisions on levels of service and costing will be made by the Board.

There was discussion as to whether SMART's eligibility criteria should be extended to seniors who can no longer drive and it was agreed that the eligibility criteria should be reviewed at some point.

11. Closed Session

Motion #2023-032

Moved by Scott Mackey; seconded by Doug Townsend

That the Board of Directors of SMART move into Closed Session at 4:15 p.m. to consider personal matters about identifiable individuals.

Carried

The Board of Directors of SMART reconvened in open session at 4:20 p.m. and the President confirmed that the Board had gone in closed session and discussed personal matters about identifiable individuals and that no other matters were discussed. There was no direction provided coming out of in camera.

The Manager confirmed that Grey Highlands was invited to the meeting, but had not yet identified its representative. The Manager will advise SMART's lawyer about membership changes, and discussion ensued about which, if any, municipalities had given notice of their intention to leave the partnership at the end of 2023. The Manager is to follow up to clarify the positions of Chatsworth and Southgate.

12. Adjournment & Upcoming Meeting Dates

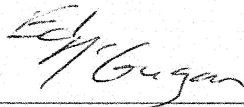
The next meeting of the Board will take place on Friday, May 26, 2023 at 1:30 p.m. in the Boardroom at SMART or at the call of the Chair.

Motion

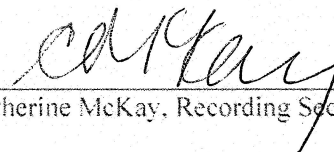
Moved by Cheryl Grace; Seconded by Warren Dickert

That the Board of Directors of SMART adjourn at 4:26 p.m.

Carried



Ed McGugan, President



Catherine McKay, Recording Secretary