

SAUGEEN MOBILITY

and REGIONAL TRANSIT

GENERAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Friday, December 19, 2025, 10:00 a.m.

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

Board Members Present: Kym Hutcheon, Deputy Mayor, Brockton, Chair (via Zoom)
Warren Dickert, Deputy Mayor, Hanover
Doug Townsend, Councillor, West Grey (via Zoom)
John Divinski, Councillor, Saugeen Shores (via Zoom)
Scott Mackey, Mayor, Chatsworth
Mike Hinchberger, Councillor, Kincardine (via Zoom)
Joel Loughead, Councillor, Grey Highlands (via Zoom)
Ed McGugan, Councillor, Huron-Kinloss, past Chair (via Zoom)
Jennifer Shaw, Deputy Mayor, Arran-Elderslie, Vice Chair (via Zoom)
Monica Singh-Soares, Councillor, Southgate (via Zoom)

Others Present: Stephan Labelle, Manager
Joanne Cook, HCSS (via Zoom)
Carolyn Laitinen, HCSS (via Zoom)

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

The Chair called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

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

None declared.

3. Approval of Agenda

Motion Moved by: Warren Dickert; Seconded by Scott Mackey

That the agenda be approved as presented.

Carried

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – November 14, 2025

Motion Moved by: John Divinski; Seconded by: Mike Hinchberger.

That the minutes from November 14, 2025 be approved as presented.

Carried

5. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – December 10, 2025

A recommendation was made to use the word “partnership” when referring to the ongoing evaluation of the relationship between HCSS and SMART. Board members expressed agreement with this.

Motion Moved by: Ed McGugan; Seconded by: Mike Hinchberger.

That the minutes from December 10, 2025 be approved as amended.

Carried

6. Delegation – Stephan Labelle, as replacement for Stephanie Stewart (BDGW Regional Transit Study Team)

The Manager provided a detailed update on recent discussions with the BDGW Regional Transit Study Team following the submission of SMART’s letter outlining concerns and considerations. He explained the benefit of a SMART/HCSS partnership model were presented to the Study Team. He also outlined risks,

particularly with the potential requirement to adopt a low-fare model that could significantly increase municipal contributions. He pointed out that SMART would likely keep its gas tax funding by remaining independent, while also noting that its older fleet vehicles could be transferred to the new integrated organization through a mutual agreement.

It was noted that no final decisions regarding contractors or fare systems have been made. He confirmed that further discussions are planned and summarized the current public engagement phase of the study, including postcard distribution, posters, surveys, a live website, social media outreach, and scheduled virtual and in-person engagement events throughout January. Educational sessions for the councillors will be recorded and made available afterward.

Carolyn provided an update from the HCSS perspective, noting that their Executive Committee met recently and expressed strong interest in exploring partnership opportunities with SMART. She advised that HCSS has scheduled a meeting with the Ministry of Health to better understand partnership models, funding considerations, fare implications, and risks related to maintaining transportation independence. She noted that HCSS supports reviewing all options thoroughly and ensuring due diligence before any commitments be made.

7. Business Arising from the Minutes

A. Host municipality

The Board received confirmation that Bruce County has agreed to act as host for SMART's gas tax funding.

Motion Moved by: John Divinski; Seconded by: Monica Singh-Soares

That Bruce County be designated as the Host County for Saugeen Mobility and Regional Transit (SMART) for the purpose of administering SMART's Gas Tax funding.

Carried

B. BDGW Regional Transit Study

Following the Delegation discussion, the Board confirmed its direction to remain engaged with the Study Team.

Motion Moved by: Jennifer Shaw; Seconded by: Doug Townsend

That the Manager continue to work collaboratively with the Study Team and provide regular updates to the Board.

Carried

8. Correspondence – Email from Loucks & Loucks on Articles of Amendment

Correspondence from Loucks & Loucks was reviewed regarding the Articles of Amendment. The amendments increase the maximum number of Directors to 15 and expand SMART's mandate to allow transportation of accompanying family members or friends (and charge them for the ride), excluding support persons, who will continue to ride free.

9. New Business

A. HCSS and SMART update

Further discussion regarding the HCSS and SMART relationship included governance status and confirmation that SMART continues to operate as a not-for-profit organization rather than a local board. No further communication has been received from the Ombudsman of Ontario since legal counsel provided clarification in July.

Motion Moved by: Mike Hinchberger; Seconded by: Monica Singh-Soares

That the update on HCSS and SMART be accepted as presented.

Carried

10. Reports and Recommendations

A. Report on October and November 2025 operations

The Manager presented the operations report for October and November 2025. October saw a 5% decrease in rides, a 4% decrease in fees, and a 10% decrease in billed kilometers. November showed a 9% decrease in rides, a 12% decrease in fees, and a 13% decrease in billed kilometers. The cause of the decline was unclear but feedback from riders continue to be positive.

Motion Moved by: Joel Lougheed; Seconded by: Ed McGugan

That the Report on October and November 2025 operations be accepted as presented.

Carried

11. Closed Session – none

12. Adjournment & Upcoming Meeting Date – January 9, 2026, 10AM

Motion Moved by: Doug Townsend; Seconded by: Mike Hinchberger

That the Board meeting be adjourned as of 10:38 AM.

Carried

Signed by:

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Kym Hutcheon, Chair

Signed by:

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Cassandra Cesco, Recording Secretary