

SAUGEEN MOBILITY

and REGIONAL TRANSIT

GENERAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Friday, January 9, 2026, 10:00AM.

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

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

Others Present: Stephan Labelle, Manager

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

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

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

None declared.

3. Approval of Agenda Motion

Motion Moved by: Ed McGugan; Seconded by: John Divinski

That the agenda be approved as presented.

Carried

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – December 19, 2025

Motion Moved by: Scott Mackey; Seconded by: Warren Dickert

That the minutes from December 19, 2025 be approved as presented.

Carried

5. Delegation – Stephan Labelle (BDGW Regional Transit Study Team)

The Manager provided the update on the BDGW Regional Transit Study in Stephanie Stewart's place. A recent meeting with the consultant focused mainly on upcoming public engagement scheduled for January. The project is slightly behind schedule, but the consultant assured the team that all deliverables will be completed on time. Upcoming engagement includes a public virtual information session on January 14, followed by a Rural Transit 101 session for Councilors on January 15 at 6:00PM. A formal letter with this information will be sent to participating municipalities.

In early February, a one hour working session is scheduled between the consultant, SMART, and HCSS to discuss operations and provide detailed context for the study. Discussion followed regarding fare equity under the AODA, particularly whether mobility transit services must match conventional transit fares when operating in the same jurisdiction. Concerns were raised about the applicability of these rules for rural door-to-door service. Some cost estimating was discussed, noting that equalizing fares could require municipal contributions to increase approximately \$25,000 per municipality.

January 9th, 2026

The Board discussed the differences between conventional and mobility transit, including door-to-door service, passenger assistance, geographic scale, and trip length. It was noted that SMART's average cost per ride is approximately \$75 (if we take the total SMART yearly expenses and divide that amount by the number of rides) and the average client contribution is roughly \$17.50. Members emphasized that rural long distance medical trips are not comparable to urban fixed route transit systems.

Staff confirmed ongoing discussions with the Ministry of Transportation and the Ministry of Health to clarify policy interpretation and jurisdictional scope. It was agreed that additional written information would be provided to the Board following the meeting.

The delegation was received for information purposes.

6. Business Arising from the Minutes

A. BDGW Regional Transit Study

The Manager continues to work closely with the BDGW Regional Transit Study Team and will keep the Board informed with regular updates.

Motion Moved by: Joel Lougheed; Seconded by: Monica Singh-Soares

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

Carried

7. Correspondence – none

8. New Business

A. Home & Community Support Services (HCSS) and SMART update

The Manager reported on participation in a recent virtual meeting with the Ministry of Health. The discussion focused on the study team's interest in working with HCSS in future transit planning. The Ministry recommended a strengthened partnership with HCSS through a revised Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), to allow both organizations to remain independent but also coordinate services. It was noted that the Ministry of Health does not anticipate funding SMART operations. Staff will continue discussions with both the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Transportation to identify funding pathways, fare equity, and jurisdictional responsibilities. The Board discussed the proportion of medical trips provided by SMART, HCSS capacity, volunteer-based service models, and the risk of service loss if municipal funding becomes unsustainable.

Motion Moved by: Mike Hinchberger; Seconded by: Joel Lougheed

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

Carried

B. Aird & Berlis legal firm

The Board revisited the potential engagement of Aird & Berlis to provide legal advice regarding a partnership between HCSS and SMART. Staff advised that HCSS recommended waiting for further clarity from the Ministry of Health before proceeding to ensure appropriate questions are addressed. The estimated legal cost was outlined at \$650 per hour, with a projected maximum up to \$4,000.

Motion Moved by: Scott Mackey; Seconded by: Ed McGugan

That the Manager be authorized to commit funds to pay for Aird & Berlis' advice on the partnership between HCSS and SMART.

Deferred to next Board meeting

9. Reports and Recommendations

A. Report on December 2025 operations

The Manager presented the December 2025 operation report. SMART provided 1,856 rides, collected \$32,841 in user fees, and tracked 27,508 billed kilometers. Compared to the previous year, this is a 4% decrease in rides, 4% increase in user fees, and 4% decrease in billed kilometers. Deadhead kilometers accounted for approximately 148% of total kilometers. Year-end totals were also reviewed with 27,274 rides, approximately \$412,000 in user fees, and over 900,000 total kilometers, including deadhead. The Board discussed deadhead costs, driver distribution, scheduling practices, and whether improved data reporting could help address and reduce inefficiencies. Staff noted that generating more detailed analytics through the current software would require an upgrade, estimated previously at \$6,000 and agreed to follow up with the software provider for clear implementation timelines and updated costs.

Motion Moved by: Joel Lougheed; Seconded by: Doug Townsend

That the report on December 2025 operations be accepted as presented.

Carried

10. Closed Session – none

11. Adjournment & Upcoming Meeting Date – February 13, 2026, 10AM

Motion Moved by: Ed McGugan; Seconded by: John Divinski

That the Board meeting be adjourned as of 10:59 AM.

Carried

Signed by:
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Kym Hutcheon, Chair

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Cassandra Cesco, Recording Secretary