

SAUGEEN MOBILITY

and REGIONAL TRANSIT

GENERAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Friday, May 24, 2024, 10:00 a.m.

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

Board Members Present: Ed McGugan, Councillor, Huron-Kinloss, Chair
Doug Townsend, Councillor, West Grey, Vice Chair
Warren Dickert, Deputy Mayor, Hanover, Past Chair
Cheryl Grace, Councillor, Saugeen Shores
Kym Hutcheon, Councillor, Brockton
Doug Kennedy, Councillor, Kincardine (via Zoom)
Joel Loughhead, Councillor, Grey Highlands (via Zoom at 10:45)
Scott Mackey, Mayor, Chatsworth
Jennifer Shaw, Deputy Mayor, Arran-Elderslie
Monica Singh-Soares, Councillor, Southgate (via Zoom)

Board Members Absent: None

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

1. Call to Order

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 the Agenda

Motion Moved by Scott Mackey; Seconded by Cheryl Grace

That the agenda be amended to advance item 12. *Strategic Planning Session* in the agenda between items 6 and 7 that the agenda be accepted as so amended.

Carried

4. Delegation

There were no delegations.

5. Minutes of Previous Meeting – April 26, 2024

Motion Moved by Doug Townsend; Seconded by Warren Dickert

That the minutes from April 26, 2024 be accepted as circulated.

Carried

6. Business Arising from the Minutes

A. Report on 30-Passenger Bus Charter

Calculations show two proposed rates for the 30 passenger bus - \$1,500/day or \$300/hour, and \$120/hour for the 9 passenger van. SMART has not received confirmation of insurance for charters using the 30 passenger bus, but the broker hopes to find a company to provide the insurance. Since insurance coverage cannot be confirmed, it is not possible to set rates for the 30 passenger bus. SMART has \$15M in insurance coverage for all of its vehicles.

Motion Moved by Cheryl Grace; Seconded by Kym Hutcheon

That the report on the 30 passenger bus charter be deferred to the next meeting.

Carried

B. Notifications Software (Grant from Federal Government)

In 2023, there were 289 cancellations “at the door” many of which occurred because the client forgot. The cost is approximately \$19,000 including driver wages, insurance, fuel, maintenance and administration. The software would notify clients of their ride via text and allow them to call in advance to cancel, resulting in savings. It also allows SMART to send messages to all clients in case of emergency such as snow days. The installation cost is \$50,000 and the annual license is \$5,655. SMART would cover 20% of the installation cost (\$10,000) and the federal program would cover 80%. This expense was not included in the budget and the grant funds are expected to be received fairly soon. There is no 5-year mandatory retention of the software because it will be used under license from the vendor rather than being acquired as a SMART asset.

If drivers and vehicles could be re-allocated following a cancellation, this would affect the costs and savings, and the \$30 cancellation fee should also be factored in. Efficiency gains could arise from staff doing other work if they are not fielding calls to cancel. Also, the calculations in the report are annual, when the software would only be in place for half of 2024. The Manager proposed waiting until January 2025 to install it. An increase to the cancellation fee was raised, since even with the software, some clients would still be “no shows” at the door, and an increased fee would be an incentive to cancel in advance. The fee used to be \$25 and was increased to \$30, for longer distance rides it is \$50, and 48 hours’ notice is required. Long distance trips are to destinations outside of the boundaries of the municipal partners. A fee of \$30 was felt to be manageable for most clients.

The Chair did calculations taking into account that some of the costs in the report are fixed rather than variable costs. He conservatively estimated the savings to be about \$9,500 which still covers the cost of the software. Staff will be able to provide better customer service to clients if they do not have to deal with cancellations. If the software was implemented in January 2025, there would be time to prepare for it, inform clients and decide about any change to the cancellation fee. If a cancelled trip costs SMART \$200, then perhaps the cancellation fee should be \$200, and with the new software, there should no reason for a cancellation. If the driver assigned to the cancelled trip could be redeployed, that would mitigate some of the cost. Discussion raised the issue of what a fair cancellation fee would be, with 50% of the cost proposed or a minimum of \$30 and then 50% of the cost. How to handle bona fide illness that might legitimately cause a client to cancel at the last minute through no fault of their own was discussed along with how to verify that a cancellation is legitimate. It was suggested that charging 50% of the cost would be administratively easier and any decision would have to be able to withstand public and media scrutiny. SMART could follow the practice of many dental offices by requiring 24 or 48 hours’ notice and work on the honour system if a client says they are ill. If there is a pattern of cancellations, the Manager would have a discussion with the client about their tendency to cancel. The Manager noted that many transit agencies do not have cancellation fees.

Motion Moved by Scott Mackey; Seconded by Cheryl Grace

That the Manager bring a report on the notification software and changes to the cancellation policy to the next Board meeting, including information on similar fees from other industries.

Carried

7. Strategic Planning Session

The Chair, Jennifer Shaw and the Manager met following the last Board meeting and proposed that the Board focus on the third pillar of the plan, Quality Governance which includes the goal of evaluating board performance, the task being to conduct a governance review and risk assessment. The second goal, identify opportunities for growth and development, will have tasks coming out of the governance review. The third goal, to ensure effective risk management and not-for-profit corporate compliance, will involve completing a risk assessment and developing a risk reporting policy. Compliance with the Ontario Not For Profit Corporations Act should be deferred until more information is provided on the application of the Municipal Act which is expected before the next meeting. As for how to conduct a governance review, the Chair noted that a package of questions has been developed for Board members which will take about 20 minutes to half an hour to complete and which could be done at a Board meeting. Responses will identify areas to improve

and/or review, including how meetings are run. Holding an annual general meeting open to the public should be added to the Strategic Plan under Governance Review. The Chair proposed that Board members respond to the questions during a regular board meeting and the governance review will be completed before the end of 2024. The Board will do this at its three meetings in the fall and the timelines in the plan will be adjusted accordingly. The Manager is to explore what other organizations such as Fire Departments do to conduct risk assessments.

Board members outlined upcoming events in their municipalities including the Walkerton Firefighter's Touch a Truck & Breakfast, June 8, 8:00 a.m. to noon. The Fire Department is open to SMART vehicles being part of the event. A fishing derby is to be held at Ground Effects in Hanover organized by the Lion's Club and it was suggested that SMART vehicles could be showcased there, as well as at the Tara Fair and Pumpkinfest in Port Elgin, events which they would likely travel to anyways.

The Board discussed the holding a town hall with the Board, and member municipalities, via Zoom, to get feedback from users. A paper based client survey done last year generated 40 responses. An electronic survey was suggested, but only 200 of 1,800 registered clients have email. The question arose what the participation rate would be in a virtual town hall if such a small portion of clients have email/internet. It was suggested that both a digital and paper based survey be used next time. Another approach would be to ask clients a few short questions when they call which would be less time consuming for them and possibly provide a welcome opportunity to provide feedback with a high response rate.

The strategic plan needs to be a living document and should ensure that the work done advances the plan's objectives. One way to do this would be to require that reports detail how their recommendations align with the strategic plan and that there is clarity about why the work is being done. Most municipalities do this by using a check box system at the end of each report so that staff identifies which goal, objective and task is being furthered by the work in question and a tracking sheet could ensure a systematic approach so that things do not get lost and the right work is being done. Jennifer Shaw indicated that the Executive's meetings with the Manager are an opportunity to connect with his goals and workplan and prioritize work.

The Chair thanked Jennifer Shaw for her work on the strategic plan and noted the important preliminary work done by former Board member Beth Hamilton and Warren Dickert.

Motion Moved by Jennifer Shaw; Seconded by Cheryl Grace
That strategic plan as discussed and amended be approved.
Carried

8. **Correspondence**

There was no correspondence.

9. **New Business**

A. **Cost of Living Adjustment**

The average 2023 wage increase of the member municipalities was 3.15%. The 2023 budget included a 3% wage increase and an additional 0.15% would cost \$1,960.

Motion Moved by Scott Mackey; Seconded by Warren Dickert
That the Board approve a cost of living increase of 3.15% for Saugeen Mobility staff effective January 1, 2024.
Carried

B. **Hiring of Recording Secretary**

Catherine McKay informed the Board that she will no longer do meeting minutes after the June Board meeting. The Chair spoke to a former clerk of one of the member municipalities who may be interested in the position of Recording Secretary. It was suggested that SMART should follow a transparent process when hiring and require interested candidates to submit a resume. To avoid advertising costs, a

job posting will be created and posted on SMART's web site. It will be sent to the member municipalities with a request that they post it on their sites and social media pages as well.

Motion Moved by Doug Townsend; Seconded by Jennifer Shaw
That the Manager be authorized to hire a new recording secretary effective September 1, 2024.
Carried

10. Reports and Recommendations

A. Report on April 2024 Operations

There were 2,809 rides in April, leading to \$42,338.42 in sales and 44,008 billed kilometers, an increase of 37% in rides, 37% in fees and 25% in billed kilometers compared to the same period last year. There were 40,194 deadhead kilometres driven and a trend seems to be emerging that points to a 1:1 ratio for deadhead kilometres. Given the ridership level, the rate increase that went into effect on April 1, 2024 does not seem to have had an impact. However, ridership would need to be monitored over a longer period of time because there may be factors that are not immediately evident.

A question was asked about Grey Highlands having four clients. Joel Loughead said that he has no insight into this situation, but can ask the Seniors' Advisory Committee and the CAO. He added that there has not been a lot of promotion of SMART in Grey Highlands and many residents live in Markdale where distances are manageable and it is easier to get around via taxi or getting a ride. Grey Gables use of SMART is apparently not reflected in the figures and the Manager noted that there were no group rides in April but the question was asked as to why there would not be individual trips taken by residents of Grey Gables. Joel Loughead indicated that he does not know if Grey Gables has its own vehicles and therefore does not need SMART, but he believes that with Markdale being a central location, most destinations are manageable without SMART. Rockwood Terrace used SMART and the individual rides are included in the West Grey numbers. Scott Mackey said that he would look into the situation with Grey Gables since he is on the Long Term Care Committee for Grey County.

The Manager noted that funeral home cards have been printed and are to be sent out to funeral homes and long term care facilities.

Motion Moved by Warren Dickert; seconded by Kym Hutcheon
That the report on April 2024 operations be accepted as presented.
Carried

11. Committee Reports

There were no committee reports.

12. Closed Session

There were no items for a closed session.

13. Adjournment & Upcoming Meeting Dates

Upcoming Meeting Dates

Friday, June 28, 2024, 10:00 a.m. Regular Monthly Board Meeting, SMART Office, 603 Bruce Rd 19, Walkerton, ON.

Motion Moved by Warren Dickert; Seconded by Jennifer Shaw
That the Board of Directors of SMART adjourn at 11:30 p.m.
Carried



Ed McGugan, Chair



Catherine McKay, Recording Secretary