

SAUGEEN MOBILITY

and REGIONAL TRANSIT

GENERAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Friday, June 23, 2023, 1:30 p.m.

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

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
Joel Loughhead, Councillor, Grey Highlands
Scott Mackey, Mayor, Chatsworth
Monica Singh-Soares, Councillor, Southgate (via Zoom)

Board Members Absent: Jennifer Shaw, Deputy Mayor, Arran-Elderslie

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

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m.

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

None declared.

3. Approval of the Agenda

Motion #2023-040

Moved by Cheryl Grace; Seconded by Kym Hutcheon
That the agenda be approved as presented.

Carried

4. Delegations

There were no delegations.

5. Minutes of Previous Meeting – May 26, 2023

Motion #2023-041

Moved by Joel Loughhead; Seconded by Doug Townsend
That the minutes from May 26, 2023 be approved as presented.

Carried

In discussion arising from the minutes, the Manager informed the Board that abuse liability insurance coverage of \$1 million would cost \$500 per vehicle, for a total of \$11,000. Without this insurance, SMART cannot provide rides to GTR clients since any organization that deals with vulnerable clients must have abuse liability insurance. Perhaps not having such insurance was an oversight in the past for SMART. Since the GTR is a County of Grey system, it was suggested that the county pay, not the member municipalities. SMART's insurance broker has indicated that the current policy does not provide abuse liability coverage. GTR is expecting SMART to confirm that the contract terms have been met, including that abuse liability insurance coverage in place.

SMART is being asked to agree to provide service to GTR clients is because under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), service at the same price must be offered to clients with disabilities as those without disabilities so that they are not discriminated against on the basis of their

disabilities. GTR clients cannot call SMART directly because the fixed GTR routes are not in a member municipality, and few specialized rides would materialize from the GTR given its fixed routes.

Other options to solve the issue were discussed such as having the insurance on only some vehicles or assigning vehicles to serve only GTR clients. The Manager indicated that these options are not practical because it is not possible to know where SMART vehicles are at any given time.

SMART's insurance, which renews in August and has not been updated in the last five years.

Motion #2023-042

Moved by Cheryl Grace; Seconded by Kym Hutcheon

That SMART undertake a review of its insurance coverages, including the employee benefit insurance.

Carried

Motion #2023-043

Moved by Scott Mackey; Seconded by Kym Hutcheon

That SMART will meet its obligations to GTR if Grey County covers the costs of its abuse liability insurance.

Carried

6. Business Arising from the Minutes

A. HCSS Collaboration

The agreement with HCSS has been changed to provide that its clients must be meet SMART eligibility requirements (i.e. be physically or mentally challenged) to receive service. A signed agreement reflecting this was received from the HCSS Executive Director as of June 23, 2023.

B. Levels of Service

The President updated the Board on the work of the Strategic Planning Committee and referred to the minutes of the Committee's meetings which were included with the meeting material. The Board discussed levels of service and various questions arose, including how invoicing would work in the case of total cost recovery, and the implications to voting privileges where a municipality opts for full cost recovery and is therefore not contributing financially to the SMART partnership.

Saugeen Shores was cited as a possible candidate for enhanced service since it has the largest population and the smallest area, with two drivers living in the area. Another option would be to create zones with Saugeen Shores and Kincardine in a zone, and Hanover and Brockton in another zone with drivers and vehicles assigned to the zone.

If a menu of service is put in place, each municipality should request the specific level of service it wants, a contract should be entered into for that level of service and the municipality can then decide if it in fact wants that level of service, taking into account the cost and its budget situation.

Kincardine has requested an enhanced level of service, and this level of service should be equitably offered to all municipalities through a general announcement.

SMART is trying to expand its range of services to meet differing requirements from the member municipalities. What it can do should be defined with costs attached, and then decisions should be made as to what services will be offered to the municipalities so they can made decisions.

Kincardine Council has made motions but has not made a specific request to SMART for an enhanced level of service and the issue arose of whether SMART should be considering that level of service to Kincardine if no formal request has come from Council. "Enhanced" service for Kincardine would mean the 2018 level provided which Doug Kennedy indicated would be acceptable to but Kincardine Council would have to agree to the cost. The Manager has done

costings for different levels of service for each municipality and these should be sent to them, with a request for a response.

There is no issue under the AODA in not offering weekend service since the requirement is to offer the same service at the same price to those with disabilities as to those without.

The Manager has so far made presentations to five member municipal councils outlining the costs of Basic, Enhanced and Enhanced Plus levels of service, and could prepare written reports containing that information. The presentations provide general information about SMART such as the number of vehicles, the AODA requirements, and three levels of service. The presentation does not include the option of a lower financial contribution for the municipality, but the Manager said that it should.

Due to the timing of budgets, different rates based on level of service would not be implemented until 2025 although municipalities could do pre-budget approval if the issue was important. SMART could ask municipalities what level of service they want and set the 2024 budget on that basis. SMART's budget is set each year in the fall and there will be unknowns in the budget since the gas tax will change as a result of changes in ridership.

Kym Hutcheon asked for a comparison of users in 2018 compared to the current level and asked if weekend users dropped off.

The Manager spoke to the Ministry of Transportation which indicated that it would be acceptable to charge different rates, and SMART is under no obligation to charge the same price in all municipalities. The number of Sunday rides was relatively small and rides would not come back to their previous levels if Sunday service was added now.

If Kincardine receives a higher level of service, this may generate concern in other municipalities and discussion ensued about how once a municipality joins SMART, the cost is relatively low but increases as rides increase. Municipalities very carefully consider their participation in SMART during their budget processes. The question was raised as to how to allocate SMART's fixed costs once levels of service are implemented. To return to the 2018 level of service would require hiring new drivers and purchasing new vehicles. Municipal contributions are calculated on a formula of 30% population and 70% ridership in the previous year. Municipalities may not be willing to commit to a level of service until budget time, although in some municipalities budget requests are prepared by mid-August, so this timing would work.

Introducing levels of service could bring other municipalities into the SMART partnership since they will be able to know their contribution. Increases in contributions over time have caused concern for some member municipalities. In the case of one of the municipalities, the cost recovery approach would mean a price of \$228 per ride plus \$0.75 per kilometre which is the cost of a vehicle divided by the average number of rides per year and which would pay off the cost of the vehicle within one year assuming the same the number of rides.

This would be close to the level of service provided by private sector providers but would result in SMART losing clients who cannot pay such rates. Municipalities will have to decide the level of service they wish to provide. Lobbying was suggested to increase the various sources of government income for clients, although some of SMART's clients are not economically disadvantaged, and it does not have information about clients' incomes.

Direction was provided to the Manager to prepare a report for each member municipality on its levels of service and the costs, and submit the reports by email to the Board for approval, and once approved by the Board, submit to each municipality.

Motion #2023-044

Moved by Scott Mackey; Seconded by Cheryl Grace

That SMART move towards introducing different levels of service for the member municipalities to consider once the Manager has completed his presentations and that municipalities be asked to respond back within 60 days as to their desired level of service.

Carried

7. New Business

A. Grants

The Manager attended a seminar on how to prepare grant proposals and SMART should apply for as many as possible. There are several grants available, and he will do research to determine which ones SMART eligible to apply for. A service is available for about \$800 per year that alerts organizations to grant opportunities, what they are for and the deadlines. Scott Mackie agreed to forward information about this service to the Manager.

B. Donations

This item was deferred.

C. Presentations to Municipalities

This item was covered in 6B above.

8. Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

9. Reports and Recommendations

A. Report on May 2023 Operations

May rides increased 18%, income from fees increased by 4% compared to May 2022, and there was an increase of 9% in billed kilometers. A total of 228 individual clients were invoiced in May. The discrepancy in the increases in rides versus fees was highlighted and a question was posed about why the increase in fees so much lower if there was an increase in billed kilometres. The Manager agreed to look into these issues and to provide to Monica Singh-Soares information about where the clients live who took the 41 rides in Southgate. The population of Dundalk is growing and it may be important to do information sharing about SMART with new residents.

Motion #2023-045

Moved by Scott Mackey; seconded by Kym Hutcheon

That the Board approve Report SL2023-0616 May 2023 Operational Report as presented.

Carried

B. Report on Dash Cameras

The Manager reviewed the report noting that dash cam footage is accepted by insurance companies and police as evidence, although SMART has only had one accident where dash cam footage would have been valuable. Cameras are available for about \$56 plus tax which record both frontwards and backwards and coupons are for online purchases. The Manager will get pricing from local businesses as well as online providers and ensure that the cameras record both frontwards and backwards but are placed so that they do not record drivers since that is not the purpose. Signs will be posted in the vehicles to alert passengers to the cameras and cameras can serve as protection for drivers against untrue allegations. SMART should have a policy on dash cameras including a provision that footage is only reviewed if there is a complaint. Suggestions were made to solicit donations for the dash cams and the Manager said he has written to a local service club asking for financial assistance to purchase an AED for the big bus.

Direction was provided to the Manager to develop a policy on the use of dash cameras including provisions as to when they are to be turned on, when they are to operate, the posting of signs in vehicles and who can view the footage.

Motion #2023-046

Moved by Kym Hutcheon; seconded by Cheryl Grace

That the Board approve the procurement of dash cameras to a maximum of \$2,500 including tax and shipping.

Carried

C. Report on Abuse Policy

The Board discussed the policy and decided that amendments are to be made including that reporting should be to the SMART Manager and the policy should clarify when the police are to be called.

Motion #2023-047

Moved by Kym Hutcheon; seconded by Doug Kennedy

That the Board amend the policy to state that abuse is to be reported to the SMART Manager and that the phrase 'relevant authorities' be changed to "police or other relevant authorities" and that the policy be approved as so amended.

Carried

10. Committee Reports

A. Strategic Planning Committee Minutes

Motion #2023-048

Moved by Scott Mackey; seconded by Cheryl Grace

That the Board receive for information the April 11 and 21, 2023 minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee.

Carried

B. Strategic Planning Committee

The Committee will not meet in the summer and once responses are received from municipalities on levels of service, the Committee may meet again.

11. Closed Session

There were no items for a closed session.

12. Future Meeting Schedule

Motion #2023-049

Moved by Joel Loughhead; seconded by Kym Hutcheon

That the Board meet on the third Friday of every month at 11:00 a.m. beginning September 15, 2023.

Carried

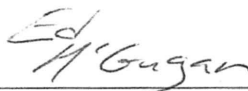
13. Adjournment & Upcoming Meeting Dates

Motion

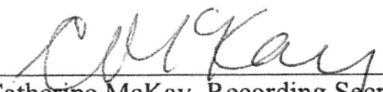
Moved by Warren Dickert; Seconded by Doug Townsend

That the Board of Directors of SMART adjourn at 3:35 p.m.

Carried



Ed McGugan, President



Catherine McKay, Recording Secretary