

FORUM DISCUSSION NOTES
RURAL TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS



JUNE 16th, 2014
WALKERTON, ONTARIO

For contributing to the success of this forum, thank you to Wendy Dempsey, Program Manager, Grey-Bruce-Huron-Perth, Ontario Trillium Foundation; Kevin Dowling, Team Leader Municipal Transit Policy Office, Ministry of Transportation; Francesca Dobbyn, Executive Director, Bruce-Grey United Way; and Brad Smith, Manager, Ride Norfolk; and all of our partners in the *Accelerating Rural Transportation Solutions* Project.



The Rural Ontario Institute gratefully acknowledges funding support for this project provided by the Government of Ontario.



FORUM DESCRIPTION

The Rural Ontario Institute, in partnership with Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition and Bruce County, hosted a half-day forum in Walkerton, Ontario to explore the rural transportation solutions.

In total, 44 stakeholders from across the region participated in the forum, which included representatives from regional municipalities, health and social service providers, and provincial ministry staff (for a complete list of organizations represented, see APPENDIX I). The following notes were captured during four concurrent small group discussions among the participants. Each group, containing between eight and ten individuals, were asked the following series of four questions designed to catalyze the conversation:

Q1. What question, if answered, could make the most difference to the future of rural transportation in your community?

Q2. Based on the information presented here today, what are you hearing that's at the centre of rural transportation solutions?

Q3. What can we do together that we can't do by working alone? Then, how can we support each other in taking the next steps?

Q4. If there was one thing that hasn't yet been said in order to reach a deeper level of understanding/clarity on these issues today, what would that be?

Bruce & Grey County Discussion Group "A"

Q1. What question, if answered, could make the most difference to the future of rural transportation in your community?

- Why is there not annualized, dependable, core, stable, broad-based funding?
- What do we need to do to work together?
- What is the economic impact of rural transportation?
- How do we value rural transportation?
- How do we communicate the value(s)?
- How do we create a shared vision?

Q2. Based on the information presented here today, what are you hearing that's at the centre of rural transportation solutions?

- Start with what is already available
- Find a common goal/mandate
- Use existing resources more effectively
- Look at what's working and what's not
- Work together, trust others, move forward
- Eliminate barriers and fragmentation from limiting mandates
- Work locally but also with province/feds
- Integration of services
- Integration of funding programs

Q3. What can we do together that we can't do by working alone? Then, how can we support each other in taking the next steps?

- Develop a Bruce/Grey strategic Plan
- Approach the Ministry as a collaborative
- Elect next Minister of Transportation

Q4. If there was one thing that hasn't yet been said in order to reach a deeper level of understanding/clarity on these issues today, what would that be?

- Need to define need
- Collect data (e.g. through a survey) on users, destinations/key locations
- Keep on track, set milestones so progress being made

Bruce & Grey County Discussion Group "B"

Q1. What question, if answered, could make the most difference to the future of rural transportation in your community?

- Would rural transportation benefit from a regulated approach?
- Information sharing with respect to unique models from progressive areas (especially with Board of Education)
- Riders need access to the right information
- Identification/branding biases may prevent uptake
- Sustainability from a volunteer perspective
- What groups are willing to work together?
- How would we get Toronto/Queen's Park to recognize rural economies of scale and challenges?
- Who does what for who? Identify and address the gaps
- Where is the sustainable funding?
- What's the model for building first? We don't want to lose services or inclusion

Q2. Based on the information presented here today, what are you hearing that's at the centre of rural transportation solutions?

- Funding: we need a long term commitment
- Partnerships
- The will to act (people and political)
- Economic Development (the circle between employment and need)
- Keep it simple
- Affordability
- Creative (get past the liability to do more/better things)
- Inclusivity
- Overcoming distance/population density

Q3. What can we do together that we can't do by working alone? Then, how can we support each other in taking the next steps?

- Full regional coverage
- Share idle capacity, capital and drivers
- Broaden mandates to offer more inclusive services (i.e. allow able body individuals on wheelchair buses)
- Utilize municipal non-government agencies more, which are easier to deal with than government agencies

- Converse, explore options and educate/share information
- Ongoing practical conversations
- Needs to be a strategic priority (outcomes and goals)
- Could lobby together as a network and be louder
- Could push the envelope/take a risk
- Need to engage and listen to ridership, which saves time and money, as they are the experts
- Collectively approach funding opportunities and avoid duplicating expenses

Q4. If there was one thing that hasn't yet been said in order to reach a deeper level of understanding/clarity on these issues today, what would that be?

- Is transit simply the road system? Or is it rail, municipal airports, buses, other?
- Who will take the lead?
- There appears to be a desire among younger people to use fewer cars
- Need to quantify / collect data regarding the size of the problem and number of people that would use if it was available/easy to find out
- There is a segment of the population that requires free transportation services

Wellington County Discussion Group

Q1. What question, if answered, could make the most difference to the future of rural transportation in your community?

- Sustainable funding?
 - How to keep the investment continual
 - Is it more money or is it how we get bang for the buck?
 - It's both – more money and using it wisely
 - Where is the need demonstrated?
- Affordability – how do we keep it e.g. seniors/dialysis
 - So a trip subsidized = 52K per year
 - Ontario Disability Support Program clients also subsidized
 - Fear that it is a bottomless put for a municipal tax base
- % of fund 64 from LHIN
 - 36% is from clients and fundraising
 - ½ of 36% is from fares

Q2: Based on the information presented here today, what are you hearing that's at the centre of rural transportation solutions

- The funding again
- Coordination
- Who has the overarching mandate?
 - It is the service providers who have independent
 - Coordination
 - E.g. SMART to bring into Wellington 20K share from Wellington North for 75K service
 - Should be shared
 - Ridership

- County
- Gas tax
- Community
- Is transit necessary to support population maintenance reasons?
 - Choice of lifestyle
 - At risk population

Q3. What can we do together that we can't do by working alone? Then, how can we support each other in taking the next steps?

- Definition of transit/ red tape...silo
- Economies of scale to bring costs down
- In Wellington County 45,000 trips, 7 providers → opportunity for coordinated dispatch
- There's a concern about volunteer drivers
- Level of training?
 - Use of own vehicles by volunteers who are untrained
 - Too lucrative/money making (800/1000 in income)

Q4. If there was one thing that hasn't yet been said in order to reach a deeper level of understanding/clarity on these issues today, what would that be?

- Uniform level of service?
 - There has to be a consistency in need in order to warrant upper tier contribution
 - How to convince our residents that this should be county service, when need is different (education?)
- Is it for everyone?
 - Teenagers?
 - Needs the need to be defined
 - Employable young adults
- Employer shuttle- 1/3 paid by employer ;1/3 paid by employee; 1/3 paid my municipality
 - But is the need there?

Huron-Perth County Discussion Group

Q1. What question, if answered, could make the most difference to the future of rural transportation in your community?

- What are existing services?
- What is the demand for the service and/or the gaps in service?
- Do you support transportation services currently?
- How do partners access funding universally and sustainably?
- How do we make the province understand the above?
- What is the role of the municipality
- How can we think outside the box for unique solutions?
- How much is currently being spent?
 - Current cost of transportation?
- What does a lack of transportation "cost" the community?

- How do we quantify the benefits of coordinated transportation systems?
- Do we know the frequent destinations of people being transported?
- Should land use planning be part of the solution?
- Focus on questions related to costs – current and potential
 - Cost/benefit analysis (formula)

Q2. Based on the information presented here today, what are you hearing that's at the centre of rural transportation solutions

- Partnerships/collaboration
- Funding
- Interests in coming to table - how to move forward and lead/control
- How to effectively use resources
- High usage for success
- Champion/leader to move things - evolves into a job description
- Where are the gaps that can be addressed through collaboration/piggyback
- Wide support – politically, socially, community-wide
- Louder voice by working together

Q3. What can we do together that we can't do by working alone? Then, how can we support each other in taking the next steps?

- More resources
- Affect policy and influence decisions (different ministries working together, or even just talking)
- Methodology emerges for working together
- A “**reason**” to come together
- Inventory done and partners at table, so next step is... Maintain interest and momentum
- Someone independent to help facilitate the process/ move it along
- New set of eyes to look at how to go forward is helpful too
- Being able to access resources and expertise within groups (e.g. GIS mapping within the county)
- Sharing success stories is key within community and from other communities.

Q4. If there was one thing that hasn't yet been said in order to reach a deeper level of understanding/clarity on these issues today, what would that be?

- What is the funding formula for coordination? – costs =revenue
- What are the “other” financial benefits/spinoffs of providing transportation?
- There has to be a sustainable option/plan for funding vehicle replacement etc. (Can't keep having a donation campaign every year, ask local car deal, etc.)
- Up to 75% of _____
- GAS TAX allocations

APPENDIX I – Organizations represented at the forum

**Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition
Dillon Consulting
Ride Norfolk
Saugeen Mobility
ONEcare Support
People First
Huron County
Public Health Grey/Bruce
Ministry of Transportation
Bruce County
Legal Aid Ontario
Home and Community Support Services of Grey Bruce
Municipality of Brockton
Lambton Elderly Outreach
Wellington County
Grey County
South Central Ontario Region Economic Development Corporation
South East Grey Community Health Centre
Municipality of North Bruce Peninsula
Municipality of Huron Kinloss
Municipality of Central Huron
United Way Perth Huron
United Way Bruce Grey
Ontario Trillium Foundation, Grey-Bruce-Huron-Perth**