

# Bruce County Transit Demand & Feasibility Study

Presentation to County Council

December 2023

# Study Purpose and Context



# Purpose of Transit Demand & Feasibility Study

Determine **un-met travel needs** of Bruce County

Recommend **potential transportation solutions** to address those needs

Technical Recommendations provided for:

- Short term (0-2 years)
- Medium term (3-10 years)
- Long term (10 years or more)

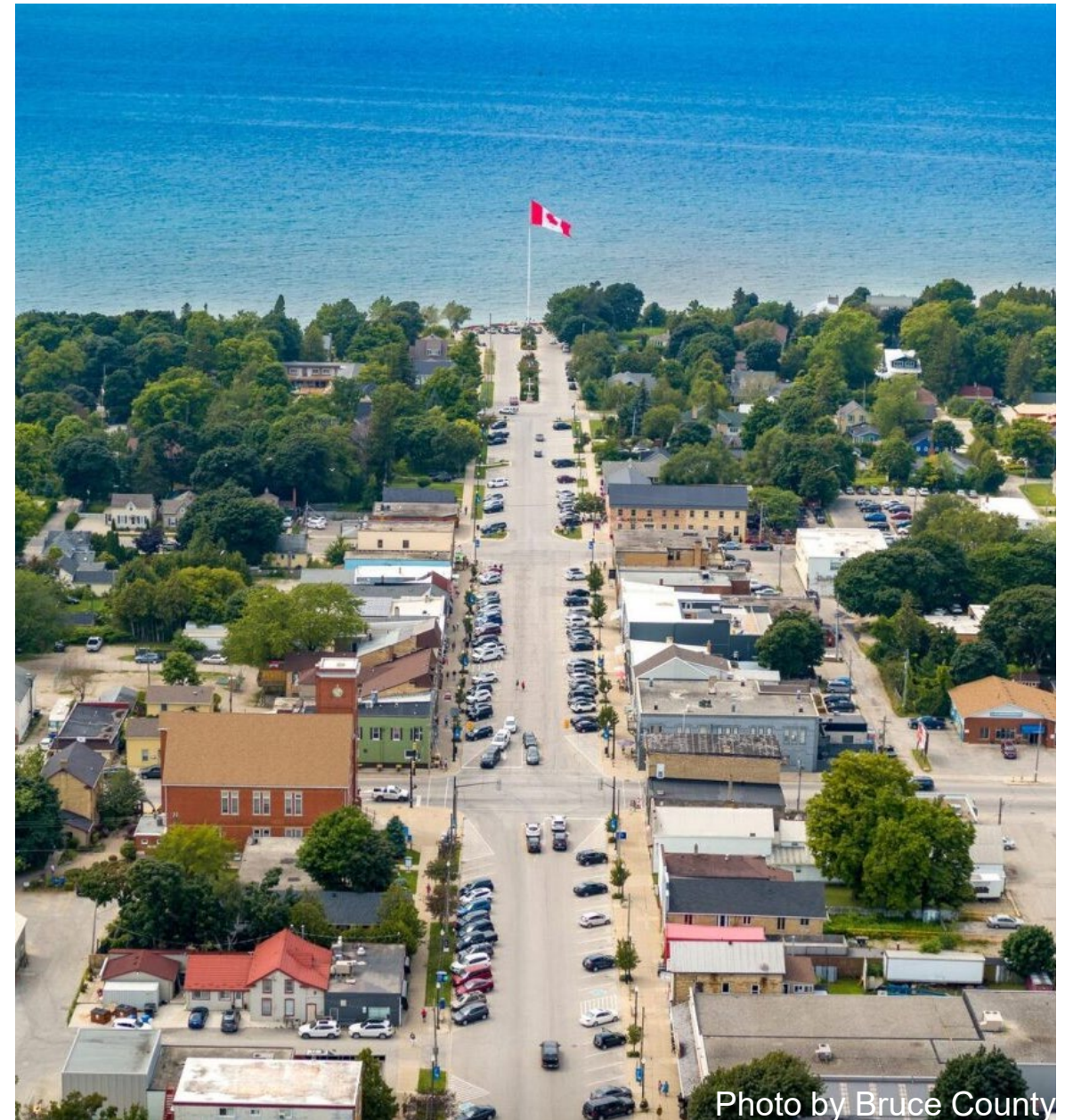


Photo by Bruce County

# Study Progression



# Context

## Conventional Transit

- Conventional public transportation is open to anyone that wishes to use it
- Implementation of conventional public transportation recommended by the County's Master Transportation Plan and Saugeen Shores TMP
- No County-wide conventional service exists today, but isolated services operate in parts of the County
- Publicly-funded conventional transit has recently debuted in:
  - Grey County (GTR)
  - Perth County (PC Connect)
  - Wellington County (RideWell)



Photo by Grey County



# Context

## Specialized Transit

- Specialized transit provides door-to-door transportation for people with disabilities
- Specialized transit in Bruce County is provided by:
  - Saugeen Mobility & Regional Transit (SMART)
  - Home & Community Support Services (HCSS) of Grey-Bruce
- SMART is funded by provincial Gas Tax and 5 of 8 Bruce County lower-tier municipalities
- HCSS primarily serves medical transportation and is partially funded by the Ministry of Health



Photo by SMART

# Context

## Community Transportation Grant

- Many new transit systems, including Grey County, have been supported by the Community Transportation Grant (CTG) program
- Introduced to provide **temporary** operational funding support for the establishment of rural transit services
- The Province is no longer accepting CTG applications and funding is set to permanently expire in 2025



# Engagement Summary



# Engagement Summary

## Overview

- Members of the public, local municipalities, and other stakeholders were consulted at two points in the study
  - The **first phase** solicited information about unmet transportation needs and opportunities to address those needs
  - The **second phase** collected feedback about proposed solutions
- Public consultation consisted of online and paper surveys available through the County's website and through County facilities and stakeholder networks
- Stakeholder consultation was conducted via in-person collaborative sessions (phase 1) and virtual touchpoints (phase 2)

# Phase 1: Needs & Opportunities

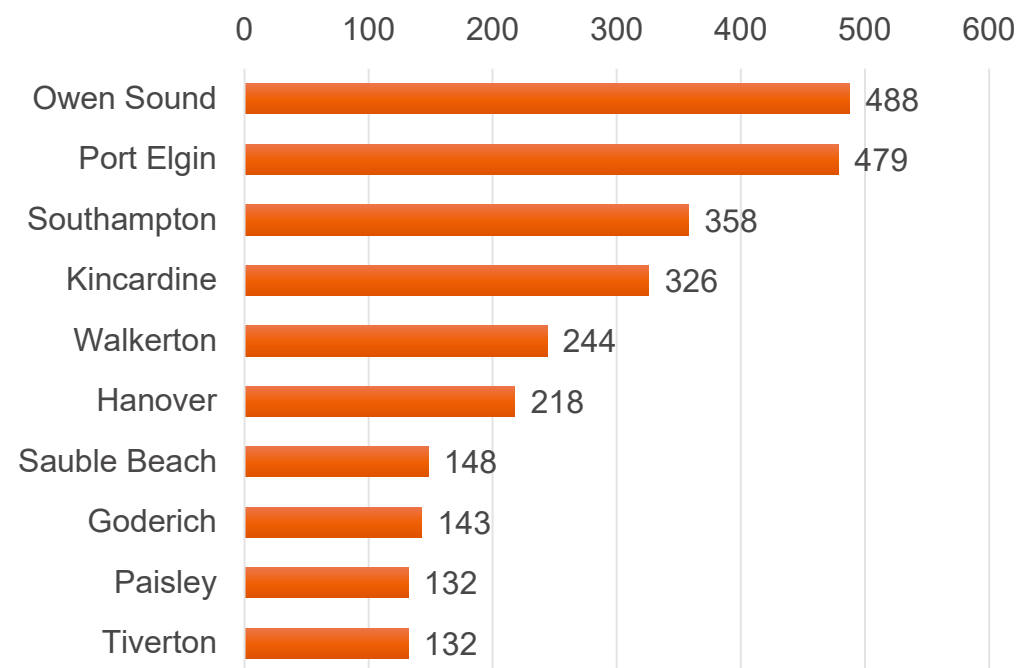
## Public Consultation

- Public consultation consisted of a public-facing survey, which ran from May 1 until May 26
- The survey received over 950 responses
- Residents identified a broad variety of destinations and travel needs

## Stakeholder Consultation

- Stakeholder consultation was held on May 17 at the Rotary Riverside Palace in Paisley
- Stakeholders raised numerous issues, including:
  - Access to year-round or seasonal employment
  - Access to social services, such as food banks
  - Increasing demand for specialized transit

## Where do you regularly travel from home on weekdays?



## Phase 2: Proposed Solutions

### Public Consultation

- The survey ran from August 11 to September 5 and received over 750 responses
- Residents were asked to prioritize different transportation needs and provide additional comments if desired
- Some themes included:
  - Travel to larger communities within and beyond the County
  - Social isolation for seniors
  - Access to Pearson Airport

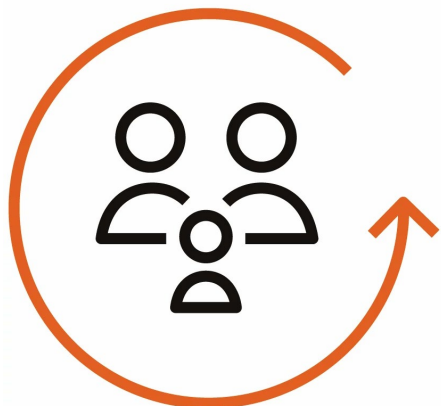
### Stakeholder Consultation

- Two 90-minute workshops held virtually on July 27, one with lower-tier municipalities and one with other stakeholders:
- Identified travel needs were presented along with potential solutions, which participants could vote on
- Stakeholders raised many key themes that were consistent with the first phase, including:
  - Growing demand for accessible and medical transportation
  - Mobility for seniors
  - Imbalance between affordable housing and available jobs

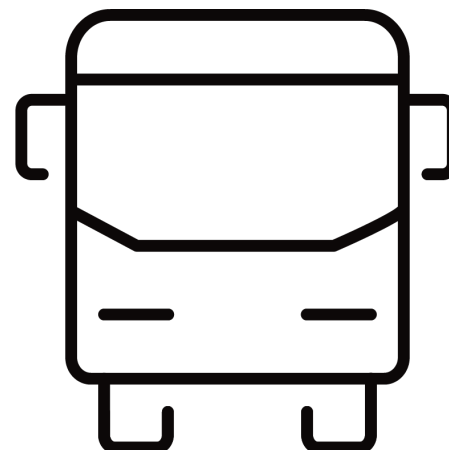


# Findings

# Findings



The needs of the County are diverse and cannot be addressed by one single type of transit service



There is a need for improved travel options around Bruce County based on existing travel gaps



Transit is an expensive service to deliver, with high and continuous capital and operating costs, but lower-cost interim solutions are feasible in the short term

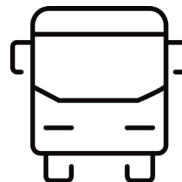
# Diverse Travel Needs & Travel Demand



- Dispersed travel demand across and beyond Bruce County
  - No clear, dominant centre in travel patterns
  - Major destinations include Owen Sound, Port Elgin, Southampton, Kincardine, Walkerton, Hanover, and others
  - 20% of trips taken in Bruce County cross County lines – of these, half go to Grey County
  - Trips in Saugeen Shores, NBP, and SBP increase sharply on summer weekends
- Lower-income populations are spread out around the County
- **This makes the provision of transit service very challenging**



## 7 Transit Needs Identified



Connecting Smaller Communities to Jobs and Services

Connecting Seasonal, Service, and Occasional Workers to Jobs

Intercommunity Connections

Transportation Within Larger Urban Communities

Tourism-Oriented Transportation

Enhanced Coordination of Specialized Transit

Improved Communication, Collaboration, and Coordination of Transportation Solutions

# Short Term Opportunities



- Operating a transit service would require a substantial annual operating subsidy from the County
- There are **short-term, low-cost** solutions that can address some of these travel needs
- The County can work with willing partners as a **coordinator and enabler** of transportation partnerships
- Initial deployments of ridesharing service represent an **opportunity to learn** more about transit demand
- Opportunity to learn more about transit needs from **Chippewas of Saugeen Ojibway First Nation** and **Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation**
- Mennonite communities are regularly chartering buses to access regional transit and services outside of the County – these communities could represent potential future transit users in the County

# Recommendations for Action



# Recommendations for Action

## Short Term (0-2 years)



### Ridesharing

County has an agreement with Bruce Power to set up a rideshare program. Service will be available to the public, including County residents and visitors

Develop detailed communications plan to promote ridesharing



### Specialized Transit

Initiate and coordinate discussion on process improvements and eligibility changes with SMART and HCSS

Engage with SMART to discuss opportunities for specialized transit throughout the County

# Recommendations for Action

## Short Term (0-2 years)



### Communications and Coordination

Establish a County information portal for transit services within existing web presence

Consider staff role of service system coordinator to gather data and get ready to actively pursue funding for transit solutions



### Transportation for Indigenous Communities

Work with Saugeen Ojibway Nation to further understand Indigenous community transportation needs and collaborate on solutions

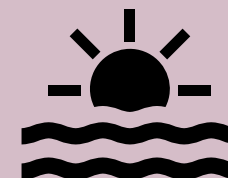
# Recommendations for Action

## Medium Term (3-10 years)



### Intergovernmental Coordination

Monitor funding and grant announcements  
Discuss transit governance with neighbouring counties and governmental organizations



### Transportation for Seasonal Employment

Monitor ridesharing program effectiveness  
Initiate discussions with stakeholders regarding potential charter bus service



# Recommendations for Action

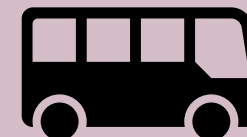
## Medium Term (3-10 years)



### Transportation Within Urban Communities

Study the viability of on-demand transit in urban communities in Bruce County

Consider joint service brokered by County, funded by municipalities and partners



### Intercommunity Transit Service

Re-evaluate viability of conventional transit service for longer trips between communities

Consider partnering with existing service providers like Grey and Wellington Counties

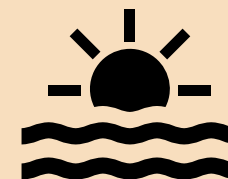
# Recommendations for Action

## Long Term (beyond 10 years)



### Specialized Transit Service

Continue to work with SMART and HCSS to pursue funding as it arises to address the increasing demand for specialized transit



### Transportation for Seasonal Employment

Develop charter bus program in partnership with employers and business associations

# Recommendations for Action

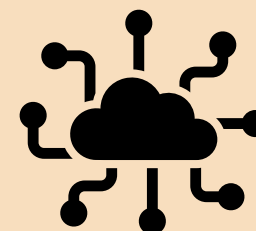
## Long Term (beyond 10 years)



### Intercommunity Transportation

Continue to pursue funding as it becomes available

Re-evaluate need for more extensive conventional transit network, including the Master Transportation Plan routes



### Transportation Technology

Consider partnering with trip planning software providers to allow users to plan trips or pay fares

# Key Conclusions

## Conclusions

Short-term, low-cost solutions can improve transportation in the County while setting the stage for future improvements

The County can monitor transit funding announcements for medium-term solutions while collecting more information from early efforts (such as rideshare)

The long-term, comprehensive transit network from the Master Transportation Plan will take time to gradually build out

# Thank you!



# Questions