



Staff Report to Council - for Direction

Title: Grey Transit Route 5 Update and Funding Request

From: Adam Stanley, Director of Transportation and Environmental Services

Date: March 21, 2024

Staff Recommendation:

That Council approve the reallocation of \$26,500 from the Business Sustainability Loan, left unspent on the Transit Demand & Feasibility Study, to fund 50% of Grey Transit Route 5 from Wiarton to Owen Sound for the remainder of 2024.

Report Summary:

At their February 22nd, 2024 meeting, Grey County Committee of the Whole supported a recommendation that would see GTR Route #5 from Wiarton to Owen Sound cease operations on September 2nd, 2024. Staff are recommending that \$26,500 be reallocated from the Business Sustainability Loan that was intended to be used for the Transit Demand Study, which is now complete, to fund 50% of the amount required to continue GTR Route #5 until the end of 2024. This would be in partnership with the Town of South Bruce Peninsula. At their March 5th, 2024 Council meeting, the Town of South Bruce Peninsula approved the expenditure of \$26,500 to fund their 50% of the GTR Route #5 to ensure service continues until the end of 2024.

Background:

The Grey Transit Route (GTR) is a public transit service that began running in September 2020 and is supported with base funding from the Community Transportation (CT) Grant provided by the Province of Ontario. GTR Route #5 provides connectivity to transit users from Wiarton to Owen Sound. Recently, it was announced that the provincial funding will end on March 31, 2025.

In 2022 and 2023, Bruce County partnered with the Town of South Bruce Peninsula and Grey County to fund an extension of GTR Route #5 which provided transit users the opportunity to travel between Wiarton and Sauble Beach. The extension has been 50/50 split of approximately \$83,000 in expenses between South Bruce Peninsula and Bruce County (\$41,500 each).

Grey County has provided additional funding to enhance the service since April 2022 and that funding was not continued in Grey County's 2024 budget. The attached staff report prepared by Grey County's Manager of Community Transportation on February 22, 2024

recommends changes to the service that align costs to available grant funds at the completion of the notice period to the service provider.

Grey County's service model proposal attempts to balance preserving some service everywhere while directing the greatest service to those routes which have had the strongest ridership. At their February 22nd, 2024 Committee of the Whole Meeting, Grey County passed resolution to support Option 1.

Specific to GTR Route #5, Option 1 would see service from Owen Sound to Wiarton cease on September 2nd, 2024. With this, so would the extension from Wiarton to Sauble Beach.

Recent discussion between staff at Bruce County, South Bruce Peninsula and Grey County have indicated that if the GTR Route #5 were to continue from Owen Sound to Wiarton from September 2nd, 2024 to December 31st, 2024 it would need to be fully funded by Bruce County and South Bruce Peninsula. The expected cost for the remaining 4 months of 2024 is approximately \$53,000. This would require a commitment of \$26,500 from both Bruce County and South Bruce Peninsula.

Staff are proposing that the \$26,500 needed to continue this service until the end of the 2024 fiscal year be funded from a portion of the remaining \$57,000 that was allocated to the Transit Demand & Feasibility Study from the Business Sustainability Loan. The Transit Demand Study was completed in December of 2023 and will not require the use of those funds. At their March 5th, 2024 Council meeting, the Town of South Bruce Peninsula approved the expenditure of \$26,500 to fund their 50% of the GTR Route #5 to ensure service continues until the end of 2024.

Staff will continue to communicate with Grey County and South Bruce Peninsula Staff to determine what options may be available for service continuation in 2025. The provincial funding that supports Grey County's Transit service is set to end on March 31st, 2025. Any further funding requests for GTR Route #5 would be brought forward for Council's consideration in the 2025 budget.

Financial/Staffing/Legal/IT Considerations:

The Business Sustainability Loan had a balance at the end of 2023 of approximately \$57,000 which was allocated to the Transit Demand Study (completed in 2023). Reallocation of \$26,500 is needed to fund Bruce County's portion for the remaining 4 months.

Interdepartmental Consultation:

Consultation with the Community Development Office, Corporate Services and the Office of the CAO.

Link to Strategic Goals and Objectives:

Environment and Climate Change - Build capacity to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change

Community and Partnerships - Enhance and grow partnerships

Link to Departmental Plan Goals and Objectives, if any:

Not Applicable.

Report Author:

Adam Stanley, Director of Transportation and Environmental Services

Approved for Submission:

Sean Morphy, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer