



Staff Report to Council - for Information

Title: Bruce, Dufferin, Grey, Wellington Regional Transit Study Update and Engagement

From: Adam Stanley, Director of Transportation and Environmental Services

Date: March 19, 2026

Report Number: TES-2026-005

Report Purpose:

This report is for information.

Report Summary:

This report and accompanying presentation share early findings from the Bruce, Dufferin, Grey & Wellington (BDGW) Regional Transit Study and seek Council feedback to help inform next steps on Phase One of this work.

This study builds on Council's previous approval of the Ontario Transit Investment Fund (OTIF) agreement (TES-2025-020, October 2, 2025), which enabled the four partner counties to begin assessing the feasibility of a unified regional transit network.

A presentation by Dillon Consulting, who is undertaking the assessment of a regional transit network, accompanies this report. This presentation outlines preliminary engagement findings, technical analysis and potential options for service levels, costing, and governance models.

The aim of this presentation is to receive feedback on preliminary transit options, key priorities if funding is limited, governance models and the attributes used to assess them, and measures of success needed to mitigate risk and potential loss of funding.

Following this feedback, a draft plan will be prepared and presented to each County Council and the SMART Board in May 2026.

After there is a shared agreement on the approach, Phase Two of the project (2026-2030) would focus on implementation of the recommended regional transit framework, supported in part through operating funding from the Ontario Transit Investment Fund (OTIF).

Background/Analysis:

Bruce, Dufferin, Grey, and Wellington Counties—together with Saugeen Mobility and Regional Transit (SMART)—are jointly undertaking a study to determine the feasibility of a unified regional transit network. Transit needs across the region continue to grow due to rising population, an aging demographic, and increasing costs of living. Many communities

currently have limited or no public transit options and travelling between counties without a personal vehicle can be challenging.

Dillon Consulting Limited was retained to lead phase one of the project, known as the Regional Transit Study, which includes assessing service needs, evaluating integration opportunities, and identifying a governance and implementation framework for a potential regional network. The study also examines opportunities to better coordinate and integrate existing transit services across the region. This includes examining how shared resources—such as vehicles, scheduling and dispatch systems, trip booking platforms, administrative functions, and customer service tools—could support a more efficient, consistent, and sustainable approach to service delivery.

Since Fall 2025, the first round of engagement has included:

- Surveys (Community, Councillor, Employer)
- Public meetings and community outreach events
- Focus groups (Employer, Seniors, Social Services, Economic Development, Indigenous Serving Organizations, Accessibility, Youth, Old Order Amish and Mennonite)
- One-on-one meetings with transit operators

Engagement to date has been strong. Most notably, the community survey received a total of 3,790 responses, providing valuable insight into current travel needs and priorities across the four counties. In addition to engagement, Dillon Consulting also offered two virtual Rural Transit 101 education sessions for all Councillors (upper tier and lower tier) across the four Counties.

As part of the presentation, Dillon Consulting will summarize:

- What has been learned through engagement to date
- Preliminary service concepts and network design principles
- Opportunities for integration with existing services
- Early considerations and options for governance models
- Key elements that will shape the recommended plan

At this time, Dillon Consulting is seeking feedback on:

1. Preliminary transit options:
 - Do the priority corridors make sense?
 - Do you see SMART and other on-demand providers as a potential solution?
 - Do you support partnerships with private-sector carriers?
2. Priorities to focus on if funding is limited:
 - Improve level of service on high demand corridors
 - Focus on equitable access across the County, including low ridership areas
3. Governance models identified and the attributes used to assess each

4. Key measures of success that should be in place to mitigate risk and eventual loss of funding

Council's feedback at this stage is important to ensure the study reflects local priorities and operational realities. Input from this discussion will help shape final recommendations, including preferences surrounding service model, fare structure, governance approach, and next steps for implementation.

Financial/Staffing/Legal/IT Considerations:

There are no financial, staffing, legal, or IT considerations at this time.

Interdepartmental Consultation:

The Office of the CAO was consulted on this report.

Link to Strategic Goals and Objectives:

Community and Partnerships - Enhance and grow partnerships

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

Link to Departmental Plan Goals and Objectives, if any:

Bruce County Transit Demand and Feasibility Study

Report Author:

Sarah Fencott, Municipal Climate Intern

Andrew Beumer, Environmental Services Manager

Departmental Approval:

Adam Stanley, Director of Transportation and Environmental Services

Approved for Submission:

Claire Dodds, Commissioner of Community Development

Attachments:

BDGW Council Preliminary Recommendations Presentation