

Committee Report

To:	Warden Hicks and Members of Grey County Council
Council Date:	August 12, 2021
Subject / Report No:	CAOR-CW-10-21
Title:	Grey Transit Route Year in Review
Prepared by:	Stephanie Stewart, Manager, Community Transportation
Reviewed by:	Kim Wingrove, CAO
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	Grey County wide
Status:	

Recommendation

1. That report **CAOR-CW-10-21 Grey Transit Route Year in Review** be received, and;
2. That \$223,000 to enhance the Grey Transit Route be considered as part of the 2022 budget deliberations.

Executive Summary

Despite the challenges brought by the pandemic, the Grey Transit Route (GTR) has held its own during its first year in service. While ridership numbers are low, they are consistent and certain routes have seen strong growth. For some, access to transportation has made a profound difference to their quality of life. The province has extended Grey County's grant funding to 2025. Council is asked to consider the merits of expanding the current GTR service. An enhanced service level would provide residents with more access to affordable and reliable transportation which should result in ridership growth and truer test of the potential of rural transportation services in Grey County.

Background and Discussion

The GTR, like all transit agencies, experienced a tough year due to pandemic regulations. Transit agencies were asked to reduce seating capacities, enforce social distance requirements, and promote essential travel only. These regulations significantly impacted ridership as capacities were reduced and marketing was put on hold. Additionally, ridership was impacted because many people worked from home, were avoiding public places and key destinations were closed. The GTR passively promoted the service during the past year, but since May of 2021 the GTR has been actively promoting the service through newspaper ads, digital display ads, radio commercials, in person promotions and on social media. Over the next year the GTR aims to capture the attention of youth, employees, employers, those

wishing to attend medical appointments and engage in social activities. A detailed overview of the GTR's marketing efforts can be found in [Appendix B](#)

The GTR's success comes from being seen as an affordable and reliable service. Throughout the year the GTR enhanced service by accepting cash on all routes, modified stop locations and stop times and added bike racks to all buses. Additionally, the GTR partnered with the Town of Shelburne to offer weekend service between Dundalk and Orangeville for a 5-month pilot, and the GTR partnered with South Bruce Peninsula and Bruce County to offer service to Sauble Beach for the summer months in 2021.

Over the past twelve months the GTR received feedback through driver interactions, community outreach, community stakeholders, phone calls, emails and most recently a service improvement survey. While residents appreciate the service, they expressed a need for more days of service and additional stop locations. This will be critical to the GTR's ability to significantly increase ridership in the future.

To better meet the needs of the public, the GTR needs to operate seven days a week between Owen Sound and Orangeville, seven days a week between Owen Sound and Blue Mountains, five days a week between Owen Sound and Wiarton and five days a week between Flesherton and Hanover. Ridership statistics, survey results, ridership feedback, call volume, and website clicks can be found in [Appendix A](#)

In conclusion, this has been a successful year, while many transit agencies lost riders, the GTR built positive relationships and obtained riders. In order to keep the positive momentum, staff recommend an additional financial investment of \$ 223,000 in 2022 to increase the GTR's operating days for a one-year pilot. The province has allowed the use of savings from previous years to be used as an offset, making the service level increase at this level of investment possible. Throughout the pilot feedback will be gathered to determine the feasibility and need for the additional service. A detailed financial breakdown can be found under [Financial and Resource Implications](#).

Next Steps

- The Grey Transit Route will continue to monitor and obtain feedback from riders to improve service over the next few years.
- With Council support, the Grey Transit Route will include \$ 223,000 into the 2022 budget to add additional days of service to the GTR.
- If County Council approves additional funding during the 2022 budget process, the GTR will actively promote the additional service.
- Grey County staff have consulted Bruce County and Brockton staff regarding continuing the route to Walkerton. Bruce County and Brockton staff have noted the expense and will bring it forward to their respective Councils

Legal and Legislated Requirements

None.

Financial and Resource Implications

On June 28, 2021 the province announced that the Community Transportation projects would receive an additional \$1,231,456.78 over two years. The Township of Southgate is eligible to receive funding of up to \$153,548.56 per year in 2023-24 and 2024-25 for a total of up to \$307,097.12 over two years. The County of Grey is eligible to receive funding of up to \$462,179.83 per year in 2023-24 and 2024-25 for a total of up to \$924,359.66 over two years.

Route	Current Operating Days	Proposed Operating Days	Trips Per Day (Current and Proposed)	Proposed 2022 Cost to Grey County (Including HST)
1 - Owen Sound to Dundalk	5 days per week Monday - Friday	7 days per week & Holidays	3	\$ 33,000
2 - Dundalk to Orangeville	5 days per week Monday - Friday	7 days per week & Holidays	4	\$ 0
3 - Owen Sound to Meaford	5 days per week Wednesday - Sunday	7 days per week & Holidays	6	\$ 32,000
4 - Meaford to Blue Mountains	5 days per week Wednesday - Sunday	7 days per week & Holidays	4	\$ 23,000
5 - Owen Sound to Wiarton	3 days per week Tuesday - Thursday	5 days per week & Holidays Monday - Friday	3	\$ 0
6 - Owen Sound to Hanover	2 days per week Monday & Friday	5 days per week & Holidays Monday - Friday	4	\$ 135,000
				\$ 223,000

Notes:

Route 5: It is estimated that the Provincial Grant will cover the full cost of the additional services.

Route 6: This route is outside the scope of the Provincial Grant and relies fully on another funding source.

The cost to Grey County in 2022 is net of offsetting funds available from previous year savings. Should the County decide to continue with the increased level of service in future years and no other grant funding be available, the cost of the service is estimated to increase by \$650,000 in 2023 and \$840,000 in 2024.

Relevant Consultation

Community stakeholders

Residents

Employment agencies

Employers

Grey County Finance Department

Appendices and Attachments

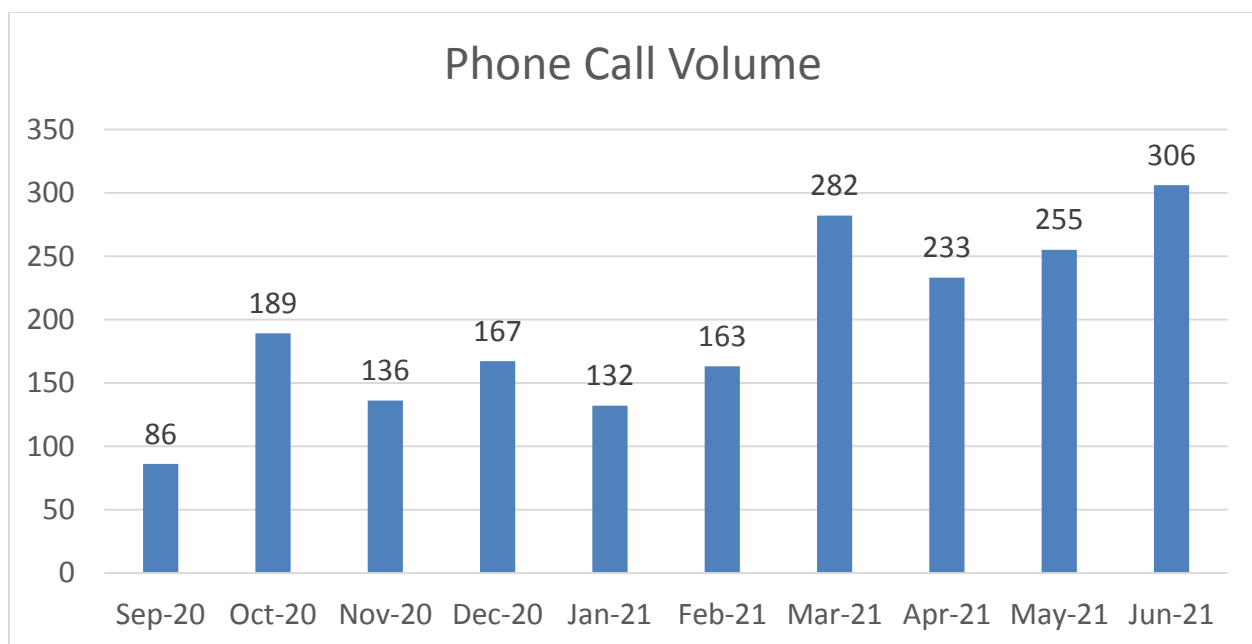
Appendix A

[GTR Ridership Stats, Ridership by Stop](#)

[June 2021 Survey Results, June 2021 Survey Results - Raw Data](#)

[Ridership Feedback / Good News](#)

Website Clicks		
Month	Grey.ca/GTR	Booking Site
September 2020	2,394	318
October 2020	1,615	313
November 2020	1,165	335
December 2020	1,540	385
January 2021	686	179
February 2021	878	198
March 2021	1,312	340
April 2021	810	213
May 2021	1,639	333
June 2021	1,726	372
Total	13,765	2,986



Appendix B

GTR Marketing and Promotions

Digital Display Ads - Postmedia

- April to July 2021

Social Media Campaign

- September to December 2021

Radio

- **Country 93** - May 10 – July 3, 2021
- **Country 105** - July 3 to October 9, 2021

In Person

- **December 2020**
 - Promoted all GTR services
- **July 2021**
 - Promoted additional service to Sauble Beach

Newspaper

- **GBTW**
 - May 6 & 20, June 3 & 17, July 1 & 15, Aug 5 & 19
- **The Sun Times**
 - May 11 & 25, June 8 & 22, July 6 & 27, Aug 10 & 24
- **The Post**
 - May 13 & 27, June 10 & 24, July 8 & 22, Aug 12 & 26
- **Dundalk Herald & Flesherton Advance**
 - June 30 & August 25
- **Shelburne Free Press**
 - July 8 & September 9