

# **SAUGEEN MOBILITY**

## **and REGIONAL TRANSIT**

---

### **GENERAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

Friday, January 26, 2024, 10:00 a.m.

Boardroom, 603 Bruce Rd 19, Walkerton, ON & via Zoom

**Board Members Present:** Ed McGugan, Councillor, Huron-Kinloss, Chair  
Doug Townsend, Councillor, West Grey, Vice Chair  
Warren Dickert, Deputy Mayor, Hanover, Past Chair  
Cheryl Grace, Councillor, Saugeen Shores  
Kym Hutcheon, Councillor, Brockton  
Doug Kennedy, Councillor, Kincardine  
Scott Mackey, Mayor, Chatsworth  
Jennifer Shaw, Deputy Mayor, Arran-Elderslie (via Zoom)  
Monica Singh-Soares, Councillor, Southgate (via Zoom)

**Board Members Absent:** Joel Loughead, Councillor, Grey Highlands

**Others Present:** Stephan Labelle, SMART Manager  
Catherine McKay, Recording Secretary

#### **1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m.

#### **2. Elections**

The Chair asked the Manager in his capacity as Corporate Secretary to preside over the elections of Chair and Vice-Chair and vacated the chair.

##### **ELECTION OF CHAIR**

The Corporate Secretary called for nominations for the position of Chair. Warren Dickert nominated Ed McGugan and Scott Mackey seconded the motion. Ed McGugan accepted the nomination. No further nominations were received and a motion to declare nominations closed was made by Warren Dickert and seconded by Doug Townsend. Ed McGugan was declared Chair by acclamation.

##### **ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR**

The Corporate Secretary called for nominations for Vice Chair. Warren Dickert nominated Doug Townsend and the nomination was seconded by Doug Kennedy. Doug Townsend accepted the nomination. No further nominations were received, and a motion to declare nominations closed was made by Cheryl Grace and seconded by Kym Hutcheon. Doug Townsend was declared Vice-Chair by acclamation.

The Chair was assumed by Ed McGugan who thanked Board members for their service and pledged to work toward achieving SMART's goals in the coming year..

#### **3. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

None declared.

#### **4. Approval of the Agenda**

**Motion** Moved by Cheryl Grace; Seconded by Kym Hutcheon

That the agenda be amended to move item 8A *Ontario Ombudsman Complaint Against Saugeen Mobility* to the closed session, add item 9E *Email Regarding Brockton Visitor Guide* and move item 9A *Legal Addition to the SMART Website to Address Ombudsman Complaint* to follow the closed session, and that the agenda be accepted as so amended.

**Carried**

**5. Delegations**

There were no delegations.

**6. Minutes of Previous Meeting – December 22, 2023**

**Motion** Moved by Doug Townsend; Seconded by Doug Kennedy  
That the minutes from December 22, 2023 be accepted as circulated.  
**Carried**

**7. Business Arising from the Minutes**

**A. 2024 Budget Scenario**

The 2024 budget presented at the last meeting showed municipal contributions at the 2023 level. The implications of the increase in user fees on the budget were raised. The amount of gas tax is legislated and SMART expects to receive \$748,000 in 2024 based on a three year average of rides and population that includes 2020, when rides were down due to COVID. No word has been received as to the amount of gas tax, and typically SMART is informed of the amount in April or May. The Manager said that the amount could be lower than expected, but he has not heard anything from industry associations about a reduction. There is an overall \$750 million operational shortfall in transit in Canada. The Manager will submit a report at the next meeting on the budgetary impact of a 15% reduction in rides.

Rides are projected to increase by 11% in 2024 but revenues are shown as down by 7% which could be the result of deadheads or fewer long trips since the mix of short and long rides impacts revenue. Revenue is down from group excursions which use the large bus that can accommodate 14 wheelchairs or 30 passengers. The bus is used three to four times a week and is full when used. Peak time for group excursions is spring, summer and fall and clients are mostly residents of long term care homes, with the fees charged to the home rather than individuals. Since a number of long term care homes are privately owned and make significant profits, it was suggested that they should pay more and the cost of excursions for their residents should not be borne by municipal taxpayers. The issue of different excursion rates for residents of private long term care facilities is to be added to a future agenda.

Arran-Elderslie Council expressed concern that its invoice for 2024 was issued before the Board passed its budget. This is similar to what occurs when a municipal council sets its tax rate after it passes its budget. Interim property tax notices are sent out, and the final calculations are reflected in subsequent bills. SMART follows a similar practice by sending two invoices, the first for 50% of the contribution, with any adjustments arising from the budget being reflected in the second invoice. If the municipal contributions will not be changed from what is shown in the proposed budget, the Board could accept them pending finalization of other parts of the budget. The Manager noted that the amount of the gas tax has no impact on municipal contributions.

**Motion** Moved by Cheryl Grace; Seconded by Monica Singh-Soares  
That the Manager recalculate the 2024 budget for Board consideration at the next meeting.  
**Carried**

**Motion** Moved by Warren Dickert; Seconded by Kym Hutcheon  
That the municipal contributions for 2024 be set at the amounts shown in the 2024 draft budget.  
**Carried**

**Motion** Moved by Scott Mackey; Seconded by Cheryl Grace  
That the Manager present a report at the next meeting regarding usage and billing rates for large group excursions.  
**Carried**

**8. Correspondence**

The correspondence was moved to the closed session.

**9. New Business**

**A. Legal Addition to SMART Website to Address Ombudsman Complaint**

This item was moved to after the closed session.

**B. Publication of Meeting Dates on Website**

**Motion** Moved by Doug Kennedy; Seconded by Kym Hutcheon

That the December 2024 Board meeting be rescheduled to Wednesday, December 11, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. and that the 2024 meeting dates be added to the SMART website.

**Carried**

**C. Report on Presentation to Ministry of Transportation (ROMA Conference)**

The Chair reported on the delegation SMART made to the Associate Deputy Minister at the Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) and thanked Cheryl Grace and other Board members for their assistance. Five minutes were allotted, during which he made a presentation on SMART and distributed SMART *Need A Lift* cards, both of which were well received. Ministry officials were engaged in the discussion and understood gas tax and other funding issues. Scott Mackey thanked the Chair for attending and Doug Kennedy noted that it is important to attend such events so government representatives can hear directly from stakeholders and see the collaboration amongst local organizations.

**Motion** Moved by Scott Mackey; Seconded by Kym Hutcheon

That Chair's verbal report on the ROMA conference be received for information.

**Carried**

**D. 2024 Target (Deadheads)**

The Chair explained that SMART needs to set goals and objectives addressing efficiency including deadheads. He has created a spreadsheet using Google Sheets which is free and allows document storage on the cloud, thus allowing multiple users such as SMART drivers to input data from anywhere. For example drivers could input mileage at the start of their day, for each trip made and at the end of the day. The spreadsheet could then generate an efficiency number and be exported for billing and analysis purposes. Further work is required to ensure that this spreadsheet will work with the NOVUS billing system. Based on rough calculations, SMART has an efficiency rate of 64%, and 36% of kilometres may be deadhead, indicating an opportunity for review.

**Motion** Moved by Cheryl Grace; Seconded by Monica Singh-Soares

That the Manager develop a deadhead measurement system by May 1, 2024, develop measures and strategies by October 1, 2024 and implement these strategies by December 31, 2024.

**Carried**

**E. Email Regarding Brockton Marketing**

The Manager received an email about advertising SMART services in the Brockton Visitor Guide. Since there are no funds budgeted for marketing and visitors to Brockton are unlikely to become SMART clients, it was decided not to pursue the matter and the verbal report was received for information.

**10. Reports and Recommendations**

**A. Report on December 2023 Operations**

The report showed 1,904 rides, \$19,094.90 in sales and 21,974 billed kilometers, an increase of 3% in rides, a decrease of 24% in fees, and a decrease of 19% in billed kilometers compared to the same period last year. In December 2023, 207 out of 1,800 active clients generated all the rides. For future reports, the Manager will add the number of clients taking rides for each municipality

A technical issue with the accounting software resulted in incomplete data for the December report. The Manager and staff are working to resolve it for next month's report. SMART has some clients who take short trips, but the driver might have to travel some distance to get to the client, resulting in a greater subsidy by the municipality because the driven kilometres are considerably greater than the billable kilometres. There was discussion about the level of subsidy of rural versus urban trips. The Chair noted that this is an example of why

data is important to increase efficiency and develop strategies to improve SMART's service. The Manager was also asked to add labels to the graph in his reports.

**Motion** Moved by Cheryl Grace; seconded by Monica Singh-Soares  
That the December 2024 Operations report be accepted as presented.

**Carried**

**11. Committee Reports**

There were no committee reports.

**12. Closed Session**

**Motion** Moved by Scott Mackey; seconded by Kym Hutcheon

That the SMART Board convene in closed session at 11.45 a.m. to discuss personal matters about an identifiable individual and an ongoing investigation respecting the board by the Ombudsman.

**Carried**

The SMART Board reconvened in open session at 12:10 p.m. and the Chair confirmed that the Board had gone in closed session and discussed matters about an identifiable individual and an ongoing investigation respecting the board by the Ombudsman and that no other matters were discussed.

**13. Strategic Planning Session**

This item was deferred to the February Board meeting and time will be added to the agenda to accommodate it. Board Member Jennifer Shaw and the Manager will confer in advance to identify issues to be addressed.

**14. New Business (cont'd)**

**A. Legal Addition to SMART Website to Address Ombudsman Complaint**

It was agreed to defer additions to the web site until the Ombudsman's final report has been received. The Manager will get an estimate from Innovative Inc., which manages the web site, on the cost to make it accessible. Monica Singh-Soares will check if there are organizations that could do this for no charge and advise the Manager, and the Manager will reach out to the municipalities for advice. The question of posting only meeting agendas and minutes rather than meeting packages on the web site was raised and it was decided to maintain the status quo.

Discussion turned to training required under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). It was agreed that Board members will send to the Manager their certificates from training provided by their municipalities and that it is not necessary for SMART to ensure training for Board members.

**15. Adjournment & Upcoming Meeting Dates**

**Upcoming Meeting Dates**

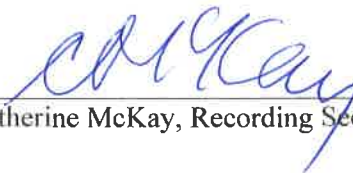
Friday, February 16, 2024, 10:00 a.m. Regular Monthly Board Meeting, SMART Office, 603 Bruce Rd 19, Walkerton, ON. Note change of date from February 23, 2024.

**Motion** Moved by Cheryl Grace; Seconded by Warren Dickert  
That the Board of Directors of SMART adjourn at 12:34 p.m.

**Carried**



Ed McGugan, Chair



Catherine McKay, Recording Secretary