

SAUGEEN MOBILITY

and REGIONAL TRANSIT

GENERAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Friday, August 28, 2020, 1:15 p.m.

Board Members Present: Councillor Doug Bell, Municipality of Arran-Elderslie
Councillor Warren Dickert, Town of Hanover
Deputy Mayor Dan Gieruszak, Municipality of Brockton (for Dean Leifso)
Mayor Scott Mackey, Township of Chatsworth
Councillor Ed McGugan, Township of Huron-Kinloss
Vice-Deputy Mayor Mike Myatt, Town of Saugeen Shores
Mayor Christine Robinson, Municipality of West Grey (for Beth Hamilton)

Board Members Absent: Councillor Dave Cuyler, Municipality of Kincardine
Councillor Beth Hamilton, Municipality of West Grey
Councillor Dean Leifso, Municipality of Brockton
Mayor John Woodbury, Township of Southgate

Others Present: Roger Cook, Manager
Catherine McKay, Recording Secretary

The meeting was conducted by teleconference in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Call to Order

Chair Mike Myatt called the meeting to order at 1:15 pm.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and Declaration of Conflict of Interest

None declared.

3. Approval of the Agenda

Motion #2020-075

Moved by Warren Dickert; Seconded by Scott Mackey

That the agenda for August 28, 2020 be amended to include item 8. D. Collecting of Email Addresses from Clients and that the agenda be accepted as so amended.

Carried

4. Minutes of the July 24, 2020 General Board Meeting

Motion #2020-076

Moved by Warren Dickert; Seconded by Doug Bell

That the Board approve and adopt the minutes of the July 24, 2020 General Board Meeting as circulated.

Carried

5. Business Arising from the Minutes

The Manager informed the Board that he contacted the broker to follow up on possible cost savings on insurance.

6. Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

7. Reports and Recommendations

A. Report 2020-35 July 2020 Operational

The Manager reviewed the report, noting that rides are coming back, individual more so than group.

Motion #2020-077

Moved by Scott Mackey; Seconded by Ed McGugan

That the Board approve Report 2020-35 July 2020 Operational as presented.

Carried

B. Report 2020-36 9-Passenger Buses

The Manager presented the report, and clarified that the prices are in Canadian dollars plus applicable taxes. The current fleet consists of 25 or 27 vehicles, including two 2010 10-passenger buses and one 2006 18-passenger bus. The fleet also includes two 2010's, three 2013's, three 2014's, and, two 2017's. The new vehicles will replace 2010's and one of the 2013's. Discussion covered the following points:

- Scott Mackey asked about the historical utilization rate for the larger vehicles, and whether SMART gets use out of the 9-passenger buses. The Manager confirmed that they are used for carrying multiple clients and passengers with large or reclining wheelchairs, or passengers who for various reasons might require a lot of space. These vehicles are usually operated locally and so have a higher utilization rate.
- The Manager pointed out that the local MPs re-announced the ICIP funding. SMART submitted an application for a three-year program which is now in year two. ICIP funding is 40% federal and 33% provincial, leaving SMART to pay the remaining 27%. Fiat Chrysler has stopped making the Dodge Caravan and will be manufacturing a Voyager based on the Pacifica.
- The Chair noted that the fleet is aging and the Manager added that some vehicles have mileage in the range of 400,000 km, and the 2013 buses have 300,000 km on them.
- Warren Dickert asked about the process for disposing of vehicles. The Manager explained that the last two, which were 2007's, were sold to SMART's usual repair shop which purchases old vehicles for a credit on the SMART account. Other vehicles have been sent to auction and SMART gets about \$300.00 per vehicle as scrap. The 2013 buses have some value as spare vehicles and the 2010's may have some value. Councillor Dickert asked about the need for spares, given the costs of keeping them such as licensing, insurance, etc. The Manager stated that two buses are kept as spares and to reduce costs, collision insurance could be dropped, although the liability insurance would be kept. There is one spare bus but there really should be two, and there are a couple of spare vans but only one is good for clients. Councillor Dickert noted that it seems unnecessary to beef up the spare vehicle count, and the Manager responded that SMART did not have enough vehicles last year and if a vehicle is in the shop, it can be there for days or even up to a month, waiting for parts. The Chair noted that there is a cost to keeping vehicles and SMART should try to minimize those costs by taking a closer look to find possible savings and ensure that costs incurred make operational sense.
- Ed McGugan asked about the type of access on the 9-passenger buses, and the Manager explained that it is a lift at the side, rather than a ramp.
- Doug Bell said that he agreed with Councillor Dickert and noted that the Bruce County Transportation Task Force could have future implications for the number of vehicles required. The Manager explained that if transit moves to the County level, this will not amount to an amalgamation, since SMART is the only public transit in Bruce County. The Chair noted that this can be addressed under item 8. B on the agenda.
- Scott Mackey asked if extended warranties will be purchased for the new vehicles. The Manager outlined the terms of the various warranties, noting that SMART rarely makes a warranty claim. He agreed to look into extended warranties.

Motion #2020-078

Moved by Dan Gieruszak; Seconded by Ed McGugan

That the Board award the contract to purchase three 2021 9-passenger buses at a cost of \$92,710.00 per vehicle plus applicable taxes to Overland Custom Coach.

Carried

C. Report 2020-37 Client Communication

The Manager presented the report, and discussion covered the following points:

- The Chair suggested a separate place on the web site to allow clients to register for information by email. Christine Robinson pointed out that the Board had previously asked for this as noted in the minutes, and the Manager explained that a notice was sent with July invoices and information was added to the voice mail greeting. Christine Robinson noted that the minutes refer to clients and community partners and asked what the goal is and what is being achieved.
- The Chair explained that Sunday service was discontinued and asked if all clients were notified of this, and if clients do not have email, how are they contacted. The Manager explained that SMART has mailing addresses for all clients and can send information with invoices. He will send a notice with the August invoices asking clients to provide an email address if they want to receive information that way. The Manager also noted that some clients are billed electronically, and asked if the request for email addresses should be firmer.
- Dan Gieruszak asked if additional security measures need to be put in place, for example if a client wants to unsubscribe and whether there is any risk of hacking with bulk emails. The Manager stated that an opt in/out option will be provided, and he will raise the issue of security with software provider, as the email addresses are in the scheduling system, and not connected to the web site.

Motion #2020-079

Moved by Doug Bell; Seconded by Ed McGugan

That the Board approve Report 2020-37 Client Communication as presented.

Carried

D. Report 2020-38 Staffing

The Manager presented the report which the Board received for information. The Chair noted that the number of drivers had gone down from 25 to 5 and was now back up. The Accounts Receivable Clerk had been full-time prior to the pandemic and was kept on for one day/week, and is now working two days/week. The full-time Dispatcher/Scheduler was not working during the pandemic and is now working 2.5 days per week and the Manager explained that this position could investigate features of the Novus system. Discussion covered the following points:

- Warren Dickert noted that the recommendation in the report should cover the Dispatcher/Scheduler as well as the Accounts Receivable Clerk.
- Given that ridership is down 71%, Scott Mackey said that he would have a hard time supporting the recommendations for increasing staffing levels. The Manager noted that the decline in ridership is due to fewer group rides, but individual rides are up to 50% year over year and it is individual rides that generate most of the paperwork. Christine Robinson asked what criteria was used to increase the Accounts Receivable Clerk to two days, and what is the justification to increase the position to three days. The Chair explained that individual rides create most of the work and with individual rides returning to almost 50% from the previous year, that would justify an increase to 2.5 days, and the Manager is recommending an increase to three days. The Manager noted that the Board's next meeting is October 23, 2020 and the paperwork involved in rides will continue to grow, and he would not want to wait until October to adjust the staffing level accordingly. Some Board members expressed concern about adding staff at the moment and it was agreed that the Manager would continue to monitor the situation, keep in contact with the Chair about the workload, and advise the Board as to August ridership.
- The Dispatcher/Scheduler is driving two and a half days and doing dispatch/scheduling for two and half days. If full-time in the office, this position would be able to collect client email addresses, and explore the functionality and features of Novus and get them up and running.
- In response to a question from Ed McGugan, the Manager explained that there is no charge for turning on additional features of Novus and it could better record the purpose of rides. Fare information could be put in, and the system could then interface with the accounting software program.

- Warren Dickert clarified that the Office Administrator position is full time and doing the work of the Dispatcher/Scheduler when that position is driving. The Manager confirmed that and added that the Office Administrator does not have the time to investigate Novus. The Manager clarified that Novus provides good support and that SMART would have to “tweak” its features to make it work for the business. The Office Administrator is back-up to the Scheduler/Dispatcher and will also learn the Novus system new features.
- Scott Mackey asked for clarification of staffing levels given that the workload is 50-70% of what it was, noting that the staffing does not match that. The Manager explained that the Office Administrator does the payroll, the workload for which has increased with staff being brought back, and the Dispatcher/Scheduler at two and a half days per week does not have time to work with the Novus system. Ensuring the most effective use of the Novus system and all its features is an investment in the future as ridership grows, rather than waiting until ridership is back up, and then attempting to explore the additional functionality of the system. There are currently 24 or 26 drivers on payroll.
- Dan Gieruszak asked what efficiencies could be achieved with Novus. The Manager noted that rides can be scheduled, although many of SMART’s rides are to medical appointments and so the ride is open ended. Efficiencies can be achieved by improving the quality of information.

Motion #2020-080

Moved by Doug Bell; Seconded by Ed McGugan

That the Accounts Receivable Clerk be brought back for a third day per week.

Defeated

Motion #2020-081

Moved by Scott Mackey; Seconded by Christine Robinson

That the Dispatcher/Scheduler be increased 3.5 days/week from 2.5 days/ week on an interim basis with a view to increasing to full-time, and that the Manager monitor the situation so as to be able to report to the Board at the next meeting on workload activities and how the Office Administrator can support the Scheduler/Dispatcher regarding investigating Novus.

Carried

E. Report 2020-39 Municipal Transit Enhanced Cleaning

The Manager reviewed the report. The Chair thanked Christine Walker and Warren Dickert of the Town of Hanover for their support. Discussion covered the following points:

- SMART should be able to receive \$31,000 in funding which can be used to purchase equipment that would allow for fewer driver hours to be spent cleaning. The Manager is looking into UV lights which are plugged in overnight to disinfect a vehicle and have an automatic shut off. Such equipment would also reduce the cost of personal protective equipment such as gloves and masks. It was emphasized that mechanical ways of cleaning should be looked at over using staff time.

Motion #2020-082

Moved by Scott Mackey; Seconded by Doug Bell

That the Board ask the Town of Hanover to apply for Municipal Transit Enhanced Cleaning funding and any available COVID funding.

Carried

8. Other Business

A. Weekend Messages

The Board received for information the list of weekend messages. The Manager noted that only one or two Monday rides were lost and no Sunday rides were lost as there is no longer service on Sunday.

B. Bruce County Transportation Task Force

The Chair noted that this item first arose in May, although nothing more has been heard since. The Manager reported that he and Warren Dickert attended a meeting by teleconference. He said that two possible paths are being pursued, one being that Bruce County's Director of Transportation and Environmental Services is overseeing the creation of a Transit Master Plan, which SMART is to be part of, and the second being that a transit service would start in 2021, although there has not been any recommendation on this from County staff. If Council were to initiate it, it could move ahead. The Chair asked how a partnership with Bruce County and SMART might work and asked Dan Gieruszak if he was present at the meeting, but he said that this is not part of his duties as Deputy Mayor. Warren Dickert reported that the meeting was for fact-finding purposes and that the Manager did a good job answering questions. The Transit Master Plan, which is due next April or May, is in its infancy and the discussion was focused on dollars and cents with no budget increases, as there is not much appetite to spend extra money. Any lobbying on the issue will have to be with the Mayors who sit on County Council. The Manager said that he tried to emphasize at the meeting that the SMART municipalities would not see an increase in taxes from a regional transit system, and that increases would only be seen by the three Bruce County municipalities that are not SMART members. The Chair concluded the discussion by noting that Saugeen Shores' Mayor is supportive and feels that there may be opportunities for a regional transit approach which could be a big cost for the County, and the only thing to do now is to wait.

C. Memorandum and Policy from Catherine McKay

Catherine McKay advised the Board that the proposed Leave of Absence policy maintains the status quo regarding Bereavement Leave and meets the minimum standard in the Employment Standards Act (ESA) for the other forms of leave. Scott Mackey suggested that SMART's policy should be the ESA minimum standard. Ms. McKay explained that given that the proposed policy did not represent significant change from the current policies, she submitted it to the full Board in order to expedite the approval process. The Board had previously indicated its preference to have human resources policies submitted to its Human Resources Committee and agreed that the original deadlines for the proposed work should be flexible given that policies will be submitted to the Committee first. The Chair stated that if any additional work is required which will increase the cost, Ms. McKay should send him an email outlining the details.

9. Adjournment

Moved by Dan Gieruszak; Seconded by Ed McGugan
That the Board of Directors of SMART adjourn at 3:01 p.m.
Carried

Recording Secretary Meeting Attendance

The Recording Secretary attended the following meetings in the third quarter of 2020:

- July 24, 2020
- August 28, 2020
- The Secretary also performed 2.0 additional hours of work to be paid at the agreed upon hourly rate.

Original signed by Mike Myatt

Mike Myatt, Chair

Original signed by Catherine McKay

Catherine McKay, Recording Secretary