The Tourism Advisory Committee met on the above date at the Grey Roots Museum and Archives building with the following members in attendance:

Present: Don Braden, Chair, Councillor Francis Richardson, Philip Allanson, Suzanne Ainley, Delton Becker, and Gary Gingras

Regrets: Warden Duncan McKinlay

Staff Present: Sharon Vokes, Clerk/Director of Council Services, Bryan Plumstead, Manager of Economic Development and Tourism, and Mary Jane Hills, Recording Secretary

Call to Order

Mr. Braden called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

Additional Agenda Items

Update on Chi-Cheemaun Ferry Service from Tobermory to South Bay Mouth, Manitoulin Island.

Declaration of Pecuniary Interest

There was none.

Business Arising from the Minutes

Tourism Advisory Committee Minutes dated April 5, 2013

These minutes are for information only as they were adopted by the Planning and Community Development Committee on April 16, 2013 and by Grey County Council on May 7, 2013.

Mr. Plumstead informed the group that we were successful in three different applications for Regional Tourism Organization 7 (RTO7) funding. They are Cycling Development/Research and Marketing in Grey County; Grey County Paddling Signage; and South Georgian Bay International Travel Trade under the Georgian Bay Destination Development Partnership.
Presentation of Grey County Transportation Master Plan by Randy Scherzer, Director of Planning and Development, Grey County

Mr. Braden welcomed Randy Scherzer to the meeting.

With the use of a PowerPoint presentation, Mr. Scherzer explained the purpose and process to date that has lead to the development of a Grey County Transportation Master Plan. Highlights of draft recommendations and alternate solutions were reviewed.

One of the recommendations is to review traffic patterns and corridors within the county road system in a process called road rationalization. Criteria is used to rate each road and that will identify those that are primary and secondary roads. From this process some lower rated roads could then be recommended to be moved out of the County system and into local municipal roads and a few local roads moved up to the County system.

It was discussed that one of the criteria is road traffic counts. These counts have historically been taken from Monday to Thursday and have not captured weekend/tourism traffic. Since some roads would see much higher traffic numbers on weekends and in certain seasons, it could change these numbers considerably and perhaps change their ranking under road rationalization. It was suggested that additional traffic counts be conducted on certain roads identified as high tourism routes during holiday weekends up to Thanksgiving weekend this year.

Since Goal 3 in the Grey County Corporate Strategic Plan is to secure Grey’s place as Ontario’s recreation jewel, it’s important that tourism traffic patterns be included in the study. Tourism is an important economic driver in Grey County, second only to Agriculture, and tourism is trending up. It was discussed how to be sure tourists have a good driving experience in Grey County. If they don’t they may decide not to return for future visits.

Downloading of roads to municipalities was discussed and how this will likely lead to lower levels of winter maintenance and poorer driving surfaces as the roads age. It was also discussed how this would affect taxpayers in the long run, as there is only one source of funds for road maintenance and improvements. It was also discussed how very expensive bridge maintenance and replacement is, and how this fact must be included in long term road strategies.

Active transportation needs, such as cycling, were also discussed. This has been reviewed in the Transportation Master Plan and how improvements could be accomplished. There is a County policy in place that should be reviewed when it comes to adding cycling lanes to County roads in order that new cycle lanes are added where they will be used.
Draft Submission for Committee Consideration:

Mr. Plumstead prepared a summary paper and recommendations on these matters.

Since it is known where the majority of visitors are coming from and their destinations this should help the consultants understand tourism needs and allow the selection of roads to receive additional tourism road counts. This information needs to be forwarded to the consultants preparing the reports. Different areas will see increased traffic during different seasons, summer traffic heading to beaches, winter traffic heading to skiing destinations and fall traffic touring escarpment vistas.

Some roads identified at the meeting as having important tourism value were Grey Road 1 in Georgian Bluffs, Grey Road 13 through the Beaver Valley and Grey Road 119 to Blue Mountains.

It was discussed that the resort and heavy industrial service criteria be reviewed. It was stated that trucks must use the local roads to get to the quarry, but tourists do not have to come to Grey County resorts. If area roads are not up to par, tourists could simply decide to visit other areas of the province. Application of the resort criteria was very limited and perhaps should be reviewed for major attractions. The Committee felt that it was very important to get the criteria right, then the rest will follow.

Way finding signs are of high importance. If important tourist roads are lost from the County System how will this effect signing? We need to get a better idea of where people are travelling, then sign these routes. Many tourists are afraid to take “back roads” especially if they are not well signed.

There was further discussion on the active transportation portion of the Transportation Master Plan. It is important that Grey County support this initiative further in order to make rural tourism and outdoor pursuits more accessible by improving parking areas at trail heads, paddling accesses and scenic vistas. These areas need to be safe, well signed and maintained as part of the road system.

Moved by: Philip Allanson  Seconded by: Delton Becker

THAT the Tourism Advisory Committee recommends, in respect to the Transportation Master Plan, that the Road Rationalization Criteria be revised to recognize the tourism industry’s importance to Grey County as a strong economic driver as indicated by Goal 3 of Grey County’s Corporate Strategic Plan;

AND THAT this level of importance be reflected accordingly in the criteria of the Road Rationalization Plan.

Carried
Mr. Plumstead was tasked to prepare a document with an executive summary of the recommendations discussed today and after input via email by the Committee members, to have it forward to the Planning Department and then passed on from there to the consultants.

Mr. Braden expressed appreciation to Mr. Scherzer for attending the meeting and sharing his knowledge and expertise.

**Update on Chi-Cheemaun Ferry Service**

Mr. Plumstead updated the Committee on the delay to the start of the Chi-Cheemaun ferry service from Tobermory to South Bay Mouth on Manitoulin Island.

Low water levels played an important part in this delay. The low water levels have also been recognized as problematic throughout Lake Huron and Georgian Bay.

**Next Meeting Date**

This Committee will meet next on Tuesday, September 17, 2013 at 2:00 p.m. at Grey Roots.

On motion by Delton Becker the meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Don Braden, Chair