

August 31, 2016

Ms. Anita Hooper
Ministry of Transportation
Passenger Transportation Office
College Park 30th Suite 3000,
777 Bay Street
Toronto ON M7A 2J8

via e-mail anita.hooper@ontario.ca

Dear Ms. Hooper:

Re: Intercommunity Bussing – Comments from Grey County

Affordable inter-municipal transportation is urgently required in southwestern Ontario. At present, the vast majority of residents of Grey County have very limited transportation options beyond the operation of a private vehicle. It is our view that current regulations pose significant impediments to improvements to this dire situation.

The County of Grey is highly supportive of the removal of market entry controls which would allow new entrants into the market and service innovations which could improve service levels and/or drive down per ride costs and improve profitability for the service providers. This more flexible and open market should operate within a reasonable system that ensures all vehicles used to transport people are safe and properly insured.

In May 2014 Grey County contracted Lough Barnes to complete a Transportation Study to investigate the rural transportation services that were currently offered and identify options that could enhance the service to citizens. The study revealed there is unused capacity within the transportation services provided by health and social services agencies; however limitations around eligibility criteria are a barrier to those who have the greatest need for transportation services and to achieving higher utilization rates.

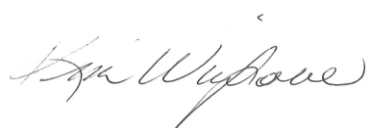
With the assistance of a \$100k grant from MTO, Grey County and Home and Community Support Services Grey Bruce (HCSS), Beaver Valley Outreach and the Meaford Handivan have launched a coordinated rural transportation pilot to help seniors and people with disabilities find affordable transit. The MOVIN'GB pilot uses technology

to efficiently coordinate local transit providers and free up more vehicles for other clients. The pilot runs through the first quarter of 2017 and early results show a significant increase in ridership and a high degree of client satisfaction with the service. We intend to review the results of the pilot with the aim to expand and enhance the service if a means can be found to do this.

While leveraging the investments in transportation that have been made by the health and social services agencies is a start, we continually hear from our residents that this is not enough. Our economy has changed. With the rise in precarious work and the increased cost of living it is very difficult for a growing segment of the population to afford both a place to live and costs of owning and operating a vehicle. We have people looking for work or wishing to participate in post-secondary training as well as employers looking for employees. Seniors who wish to stay in their homes and maintain a decent quality of life, need to access to transportation to shop and participate in community events. Regular, affordable connections between Grey County communities and larger centres like London, Guelph and Toronto would make a significant difference to Grey County's economic development and tourism initiatives, our ability to retain youth and to attract young families and new Canadians who otherwise feel cut off from services and experiences they require.

Grey County supports the position of Oxford County and the Western Ontario Wardens Caucus that in the long term, to be effective, public transportation in southwestern Ontario needs an integrated public transportation master plan.

Yours truly,



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