

The Corporation of the County of Wellington Economic Development Committee Agenda

June 18, 2024

10:00 am

County Administration Centre

Guthrie Room

Members: Warden Lennox; Councillors Duncan (Chair), Ballantyne, Breen and Bulmer

		Pages	
1.	Call to Order		
2.	Declaration of Pecuniary Interest		
3.	Delegation:		
	3.1 Dennis Kar, Partner, Dillon Consulting Ltd.	2 - 131	
	Ride Well 2024-2025 Service Plan		
	Strategic Direction Report		
	• Presentation		
4.	Ride Well Service Short-Term Recommendations Report	132 - 134	
5.	Economic Development Financial Statements and Variance Projections as of May 31, 2024		
6.	Economic Development Report - June 2024 138 - 150		
7.	Smart Cities Office - June 2024		
8.	Closed Meeting		
9.	Adjournment		
	Next meeting date September 17, 2024 or at the call of the Chair.		



COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

2024-2025 Service Plan

Strategic Direction



June 6, 2024 – 24-7602

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Project Background

1.0

2.0

At the March 19th, 2024 meeting of the County of Wellington Economic Development Committee, staff were directed to facilitate a workshop for County Council with the purpose of identifying the vision, values and future direction of the Ride Well service. The workshop was facilitated by Dillon Consulting Limited (Dillon) and took place on May 16th, 2024 and provided an opportunity for members of Council to share what they have heard from riders regarding the existing Ride Well service and discuss the role of transit and its impact on future service alternatives in Wellington County.

This report summarizes the information gathered through the Rural Transit Survey, staff consultation, and Council workshop, as well as the updated vision, service goals, and direction for Ride Well derived from this feedback. In addition, the report presents recommended short-term service improvements that should be considered prior to Provincial funding changes that will occur in March 2025 and outlines the next stages of work to develop a long-term service plan.

Identifying Direction

Throughout the pilot, County Council members, staff, and the public provided considerable feedback on existing gaps in the transportation network and opportunities for Ride Well in the future. To translate this feedback into a service plan for Ride Well's future, a clear vision needs to be defined, and an understanding of the service's priorities must be achieved. The following outlines information gathered on the needs and directions for Ride Well service from the results of the Rural Transit Survey, a review of County plans, policies and strategic directions and feedback received during facilitated County staff and County Council workshops.

Rural Transit Survey 2.1

From December 7th, 2023, to February 16th, 2024, a survey was conducted of Wellington County residents, including both riders and non-riders of the Ride Well service. A total of 1,530 responses were received, which provided insights into the successes of Ride Well, lingering gaps in service, and ongoing issues. This survey was analyzed in detail, and the results are included in the 2025 Service Plan Interim Report (March 2024). Key findings have been included here to reiterate the gaps identified by the public, that were used in the development of the short-term plan and will be used in the development of the long-term plan.

Respondents were asked about how the service could be improved, and their responses generally fit into the following four themes:

Service Flexibility (operating hours and driver availability);

- Geographic Coverage (where service is available within the County and the connections to neighbouring towns and cities);
- Accessibility (affordability and ease of use); and
- Awareness and Information.

More detail about the outcomes of this survey were provided in Interim Report #1 date March 19, 2024 which is appended to this report (Appendix A).

Policy Review 2.2

In order to identify what the future vision for Ride Well should be, a review was completed of the County's plans, policies and strategic directions. These directions form the roadmap which all County services should follow such that they are working together to achieve the same goals. The strategic directions which were identified which transit can support include:

- Access and equity;
- Economic development;
- Financial sustainability;
- Growth management;
- Environmental sustainability; and
- Community safety.

More detailed descriptions of the policy goals were included in the Ride Well Council Pre-Read Package for the May 16th, 2024 Council Workshop (Appendix B).

Staff Consultation 2.3

Prior to the Council workshop, a workshop was held with County staff from several departments to understand how transit could support strategic goals and municipal targets. The departments that participated include:

- Economic Development;
- Climate Change;
- Information Technology;
- Smart Cities;
- Ontario Works;
- Social Services; and
- Roads.

Staff were presented with the list of strategic directions identified from the policy review (Section 2.2) and a description of how transit can support each direction. This presentation is included in Appendix C. Staff were asked during the workshop to identify if there were any strategic directions or initiatives that had been missed or other opportunities which transit could support municipal operations. Staff were very supportive of transit being part of the solution to achieving departmental goals and meeting regional objectives. The feedback received from staff can be grouped into the following categories.

Adherence to Initial Pilot Goals

- While 80-90% of employers indicated at the start of the pilot that transportation was needed for staff, there was a perception that few riders are using the service to travel to work.
- Further analysis identified that riders who use the service 3 times a week or more are regularly using the service to attend work (just over 40% of weekly trips between January 1 and April 14, 2024). These jobs are mainly service industry, retail, or manufacturing positions. This is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

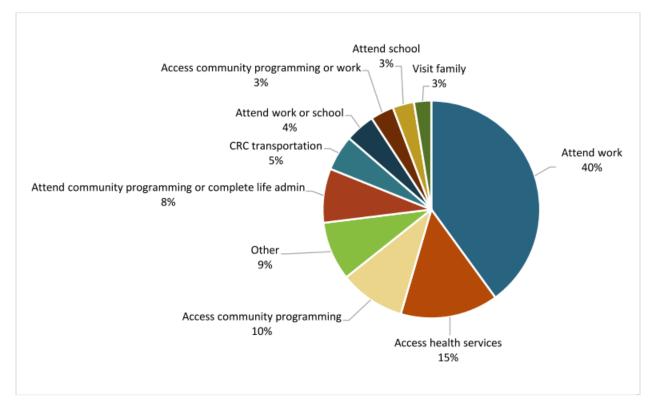


Figure 1: Ride Well Trip Purposes for frequent Users (January 1 to April 14, 2024)

Access and Equity

- Ride Well is used by social services to improve food access by providing transportation to affordable food options, and resource centres.
- In some cases, starting work can mean you no longer qualify for transportation subsidies making employment decisions more difficult.

- As the cost of living and particularly the cost of owning a car increases, having reliable transit that can reduce the number of cars that fixed income families own could be crucial.
- Equity is choosing a mode which works for you; transit is one part of the solution.
- Residents travel to Kitchener-Waterloo for medical appointments, many of these trips are supported by social services.
- Shared rides can encourage connections between community members which maintains the smalltown feel that residents enjoy about the County. Knowing your neighbour also increases perceived community safety.
- The Community Health and Housing Plan will have transit as a part of its direction.
- Connections to Guelph allow people to connect to emergency shelters currently unavailable within the County.

Economic Development

- Transportation is a key part of improving the County's circular economy connecting people to one another allowing for people to share items or access recycling or reuse resources.
- Employers are attracting employees from across County boundaries, so connectivity can improve local economic growth.

Growth Management

- Most of the population density exists in urban centres as does much of the planned growth.
- Managing traffic though transit use could reduce the need for ongoing road expansion.
- Road widening can encroach on agricultural and developable land, which has sustainability and economic implications.
- Not all infrastructure supports alternate environmental and affordable choices such as cycling and can make it feel unsafe.
- The Official Plan review will look to increase density and create a connected network that aligns with growth initiatives.

Environmental Sustainability

- Reducing the distance people must regularly travel reduced the impact on the environment; careful community planning can support environmental initiatives and make transit efficient.
- Green development standards are being developed, which will include transit-oriented design and prioritize permanency.

Community Safety

Fewer cars means safer roads for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians; however, currently, many Ride Well trips are not shared trips.

Transit provides a safe choice as people become unable to drive or who are hesitant to drive in adverse weather conditions and allowing residents to continue to connect to supports when they may otherwise stay home.

Council Workshop 2.4

In advance of the workshop which took place on May 16th, 2024, Wellington County councillors and staff who participated received a pre-read package that provided a history of the Ride Well service, context of the 2025 Service Plan project, identified goals from the policy review and transit's role in each goal, and feedback from the staff consultation. This pre-read package is included in Appendix B.

The goals of this session were to identify the policy directions that should be prioritized for Ride Well and obtain feedback on service design options and trade-offs. This work will be used to inform Ride Well's future direction. The feedback provided during that session is outlined below.

Financial Sustainability

The overall theme of financial sustainability levels was present throughout the discussions. Concerns were expressed about how much service Wellington County would be able to afford. To find the best and most efficient use of County funds, all proposed service changes aim to find the balance between both operational and capital funding pressures for Ride Well operations. Generally, feedback indicated that Council was open to investing in the Ride Well service, but without concrete dollar amounts, they were unsure about how much they would be willing or able to spend. With a system like Ride Well that has a relatively small budget and low operating costs, even small cuts or additions to annual operating budgets can have a considerable impact.

Access and Equity

Ride Well has unlocked opportunities for County residents who do not have other means of transportation. Topics like the reduction of social isolation, access to events across the County, equity, and mobility freedom were discussed as clear benefits of the existing Ride Well services. New social and employment opportunities have been created for residents. Access to healthcare and social services for individuals of all abilities and demographics has furthered the equity-based goals of the project. Council members noted that constituents have expressed how pleased they have been with the service, in particular citing driver friendliness and the convenience of the service. Ridership of the service has been increasing, which is a testament to the need for transit in Wellington County.

Service Vulnerabilities

The Ride Well operational model has experienced challenges because of its success. Many Council members expressed their desire to see more regular service to allow for more scheduling certainty when customers are planning trips, thereby reducing wait times, and travel times. Wellington County is nearly 2,700 km², and because of good ridership, resources can at-times be stretched thin across the

service area. Having flexible levels of service aligned with the demand observed around the County was expressed as a desire for the service. Because of demand outpacing supply, there have been issues with trips going unaccommodated when there are vehicle shortage. This problem has been especially apparent in the northern areas of the County.

Accessibility

2.5

This theme was highlighted several times as a concern, providing examples of persons with disabilities experiencing challenges when using the service. These challenges included uncertainty over what type of vehicle would provide their trip and availability issues of third-party accessible taxis. Affordability of fares was discussed, with more remote users generally having to pay more for longer trips being made to commercial centres. While the current service has provided numerous social benefits, more could be done to better accommodate marginalized individuals, including persons with a disability, New Canadians, and individuals without access to a private automobile.

Key Themes and Takeaways

Based on feedback from residents and staff and discussions during the Council working session, Council was asked to identify their top two strategic priorities for Ride Well as identified in Section 2.2. The two which were identified were Access and Equity, followed by Financial Sustainability. These strategic priorities were used to help define the role of Ride Well and guide and changes to the service design.

Following, the session, the Dillon team translated these two strategic priorities into a Vision and Mission statement for Ride Well. It will be important that any recommendation for the service aligns to this policy framework in both the short and long-term.

Vision:

To be a sustainable mobility choice for all residents of the County.

Mission:

To provide financially responsible public transportation throughout the County to permit mobility for residents of all demographics, abilities, and incomes.

Service Options

3.0

In order to meet the primary strategic directions of Access and Equity and Financial Sustainability, changes to the design of the Ride Well service may be necessary. Presently, Ride Well is providing a onesize fits all approach to the entire County. While this has met many of the original goals of the project and resulted in ridership growth, there are opportunities to better meet the service demand and align the service to the revised service vision and mission. As part of the Council workshop, participants were presented with the existing service model and two alternative service options which prioritized the two primary strategic directions.

Each service model considered six service characteristics:

- Service area: the area in which the service could operate ranging from only the urban centres to serving the entire County;
- Service hours: the periods in which the service could operate ranging from weekday daytime periods only to a more fulsome schedule extending into the evenings and weekends
- Availability: how quickly a trip can be obtained from the booking time ranging from needing to preplan trips in advance to having a frequent reliable service which is available when needed
- Directness: how direct a trip is from the origin to the destination ranging from a meandering trip through a lower density area which deviates to pick up passengers to a direct on demand or fixed route trip which limits travel time but is only cost effective in higher density areas.
- External Travel: the destinations outside of the County to which passengers can connect to from within the County ranging from no external connections to connections to large urban centres in the surrounding area such as Orangeville and Kitchener-Waterloo.
- Travel to Guelph: Destinations served within Guelph, ranging from providing a single transfer point to connect to Guelph Transit and GO Rail services to providing direct trips from the County to any destination in Guelph.

Participants were asked to provide feedback on these characteristics based on the presented models, outlined below. Other draft service models, prioritizing the other service characteristics are included in Appendix C.

Existing Service Model 3.1

The current service model offers County-wide coverage on weekdays only (Monday through Friday) between 6:00am and 7:00pm. The service also does not operate on statutory holidays. Operation of Ride Well is contracted to RideCo., who provide the software for the service and vehicles and drivers. Vehicles used are generally four-door sedans and SUVs, with a maximum of three passengers at any one time. The vehicles within the RideCo fleet are not wheelchair accessible, and therefore, trips for persons requiring mobility aids are completed using accessible vehicles provided by Fergus Taxi. Due to the



County-wide operation of the service and the number of vehicles available, passengers experience long wait times. As such, Ride Well encourages users to book their trip at least 3 hours in advance to accommodate their trip, and trips can be booked up to seven days in advance.

The figure below illustrates the six service characteristics defined above for the existing Ride Well model. For each characteristic, a design scale is provided, and the slider shows where the existing service model fits on the scale. Generally, the more the scale is to the right, the higher the required investment will be.

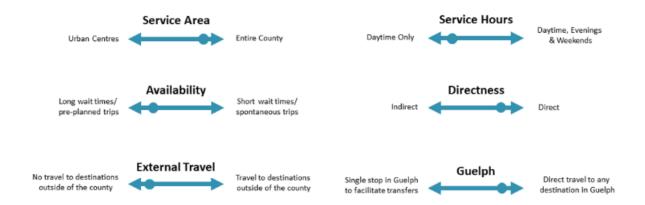


Figure 2: Existing Model Service Characteristics

Access and Equity Service Model

3.2

A service model which focuses on access and equity would see the following changes to the existing service model:

- Service Area: This would not change as it is important that every resident have access to the service in the County.
- Service Hours: Expanding the service to include evenings and weekends would provide more access to activities that occur outside of the core operating hours, including work trips, social activities and shopping.
- Availability: This would involve an increase in the number of vehicles during peak demand hours to ensure the service is more available. Another solution may be to reduce the size of the on demand zones, to provide more opportunities for more local travel to access essential goods and services.
- Directness: To increase service availability without significant investment in resources, one option would be to encourage more deviation of the on demand service to pick up additional passengers and share rides.
- External Travel: Adding connections to Kitchener-Waterloo can support access to services not available locally.
- Guelph: Reducing the number of drop-off points in Guelph and only connecting to key destinations or transfer points may increase the availability of resources within the County.

These service characteristics are summarized in the figure below.



Figure 3: Access and Equity Model Service Characteristics

Financial Sustainability Service Model

3.3

A service model which focuses on financial sustainability would see the following changes to the existing service model:

- Service Area: The service area would focus on the urban centres providing service where the population and ridership density is highest.
- Service Hours: To minimize costs a financially sustainable model would focus on weekday daytime service only.
- Availability: Service should be increased inline with demand to balance trip denials with underutilization of vehicles.
- Directness: A financially sustainable model could use direct or indirect trips, depending on the service model. Direct fixed route trips between two high-density locations provide direct trips for a large number of passengers. Direct on demand trips, however, tend to group fewer passengers, and therefore, more trips are required to serve the same number of passengers.
- External Travel: The service area would not change from existing, external connections would be made via Guelph or using the GOST bus service.
- Guelph: Reducing the number of drop-off points in Guelph and only connecting to key destinations or transfer points to reduce service duplication.

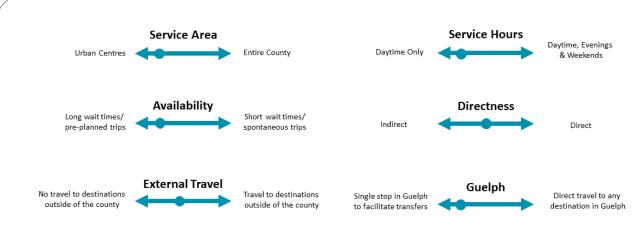


Figure 4: Financial Sustainability Model Service Characteristics

Recommended Model Characteristics

Based on the feedback received from councillors, the above service models were combined into a single recommended service model. The following details the recommended model's service characteristics.

Service Area

3.4

Currently, access is prioritized, and the entire County is served by the Ride Well system. This has the highest net cost but prioritizes access and equity. Any destination in the County can be access by Ride Well. Council members indicated that this would continue to be a priority and as such the recommended service model continues to serve the entire County.

Service Hours

The two service models differed in the hours of service which should be provided. The current service prioritizes time periods with the highest demand and does not operate during periods with less consistent demand (e.g., weekends and weekday evenings). This results in the lowest net cost possible. However, when considering other, non-financial goals of the service, it is important to consider the social benefits of providing off-peak hour services. As such, the number of hours added into evenings or weekends will focus on targeted applications where high ridership is projected. Ride Well stops operating at 7:00pm, which means that any passenger arriving at the Guelph Central Station via the GO Train or VIA Rail after 6:00pm or on weekends may not be able to connect to a Ride Well service. These trips will be one of the targeted applications for adding service hours.

Availability

Presently, long booking periods and long wait times mean that the service is not always available when people want to travel- a key part of an on demand transit system. Currently, Ride Well is more optimal for pre-planned trips, minimizing the number of vehicles required and, therefore, the operational cost. In order to improve access to the service, the wait times must decrease. In order to achieve this, Ride Well will strive to improve vehicle efficiency and increase the number of vehicles available during peak

travel periods. To maintain a fiscally responsible service the number of hours added must align with both the demand and available funding.

Passengers with mobility needs face an even larger availability barrier due to the limited number of accessible taxis available to provide trips. Moving forward, service options may include changes to the vehicles used in the service or better trip accommodation options to better meet the needs of customers with mobility needs.

Directness

Presently, Ride Well is a very direct service connecting passengers between their desired origin and destination, and transfers are not part of the system. Because of this, vehicles are operating revenue trips less than 65% of the time and very few trips are grouped. This prioritizes access and equity but has the highest operating costs. Riders in different areas of the County use the service in different ways. Within population centres such as Fergus and Elora, trips are typically quick and affordably made within the town. This is contrasted by the longer, more costly trips in the more rural areas of the County. These users must travel further to their destination simply by nature of their origin. Improving the service efficiency by grouping trips will increase service availability and reduce the net operating cost of each trip aligning with the goals. Going forward, it will be necessary to recognize these two distinct categories of potential Ride Well trips.

There are more potential customers concentrated within the towns, who are able to take advantage of their proximity to commercial, social, and recreational destinations therefore transit in and between large urban centres should focus on demand. As such the services should have the ability to transport a large number of passengers; this could be done through an on demand service, offering many short trips or a fixed route service with a large vehicle capacity. In more rural areas, the focus must be more on the flexibility of service providing residents distributed across the large service area connections to the urban centres. These two services must support one another and as such service duplication should be avoided to increase service efficiency and reduce non-revenue time.

External Travel

Currently, there are no direct transit connections from Wellington County to destinations outside of the County. This means that passengers must travel through Guelph or use different transportation services to access adjacent urban centres. Discussion during the Council workshop identified that residents may require travel to external destinations for medical trips in particular, but that Ride Well should limit the number of external destinations which should be served in order to maintain the financial sustainability of the service. As such, the recommended service model will seek to connect passengers to regional GO transit services to facilitate these connections.

Connections to Guelph

At present, good connections are provided between Guelph and Wellington County as passengers are able to request a trip to any destination within Guelph. This duplicates the service provided by Guelph Transit and reduces the availability of the Ride Well vehicles. Both the financial model and the access and equity model suggest that direct trips to any location within Guelph should be prioritized for passengers who are unable to transfer to the local service but that all other passengers could access services using Guelph Transit, reducing the amount of service duplication. As such, part of the long-term plan will be to limit the number of stops within Guelph. This change is recommended to be part of the long-term solution to allow sufficient time to review the data on trips to Guelph to determine where people are travelling and to work with Guelph Transit to identify the most appropriate transfer locations between these services.

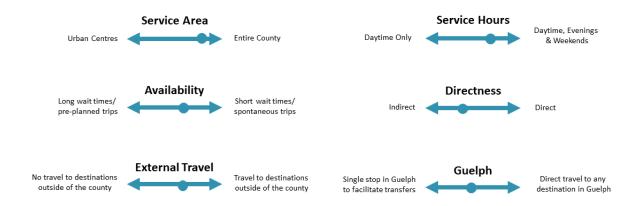


Figure 5: Recommended Service Characteristics

Recommended Service

The short-term pilot recommendations presented in Interim Report #1 (March 19, 2024) were revisited in light of the vision for transit provided during the May 16, 2024 Council Workshop. This includes a preapproved increase in about seven daily service hours to help reduce unaccommodated trip requests. Based on this additional review, the majority of recommendations from Interim Report #1 are consistent with the vision and have not changed.

Some slight modifications were made to provide members of Council with options on how to spend the additional \$227,000 that was provided by MTO to top up the service during the pilot. This could be used to further improve the service beyond the existing budget or could be used to recoup some of the increasing expenses currently spent. The benefit of adding to the service would be to test and pilot how different service modifications would impact both ridership and productivity.

4.0

Short-Term (pre-2025) – Base Funding

4.1

The following modifications to the service are recommended to be made that are within the existing budget envelope, including the additional seven daily hours of service pre-approved by Council. This does not include any expansion that would come from the additional \$227,000 in funding provided by MTO to be used toward the pilot expansion.

1. Change the service structure to include the three zones identified in Figure 6 and outlined in the 2025 Service Plan Interim Report dated March 19, 2024. These changes will not increase the cost of services as they reflect a reallocation of service hours. They will also help improve access and equity by increasing the availability of service to the north.

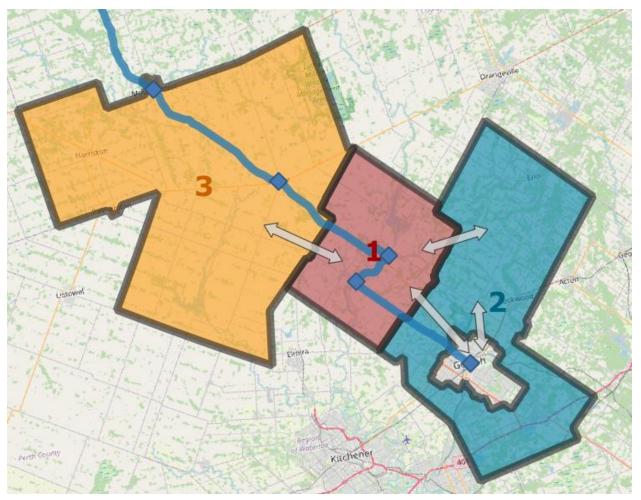


Figure 6: Proposed On Demand Zone Structure

2. Provide consistent departure times for trips between Guelph and Elora/Fergus where passengers can be grouped on existing Ride Well vehicles. This can be done via the on demand Ride Well service by setting specific departure or arrival windows (e.g., 7:00am, 8:30am, 10:00am) that would help

test the potential of implementing a future fixed route service. This would occur outside of the two southbound departure times and two northbound arrival times that the GOST bus currently operates. This recommendation will improve financial sustainability by allowing more long-distance trips to be grouped together and will further test the concept of a fixed-route corridor. By doing this, it will also improve access and equity as it will dedicate more service for internal travel within Wellington County.

- 3. Introduce a 10-minute extension to passenger arrival times for trips between on demand zones to provide the flexibility to increase vehicle efficiency and improve availability. This recommendation will improve financial sustainability by allowing more trips to be grouped together, thus increasing service availability.
- 4. Add an additional seven service hours to each day, consistent with the approved budget, to increase the availability for all trips between on demand zones, including those into Guelph, and introduce fixed travel windows for departure to Guelph. Currently, to cover the large County, RideCo schedules drivers such that there are three vehicles operating during the busiest hours, and four vehicles operating for one hour at noon. The additional vehicle hours should be focused on providing trips midday to support trips between on demand zones when GOST is not operating, in particular between 12:00pm and 3:30pm when ridership demand is high. This will help increase the availability of service, further promoting ridership growth and the goal of access and equity.

Short-term Recommendations Based on Additional Funding

As identified above, MTO has provided the County with an additional \$227,000 in funding that can be used during the pilot service (prior to March 2025). The County can choose to either use this additional funding to continue to improve the service at no cost to the County, or to off-set some of the previous cost increases that the County has already paid for. The following provides some recommendations for the County to consider if it were to expand the service. The benefit of using this funding to expand the service is to test different short-term concepts that will feed into the long-term service plan.

- Add an additional seven service hours per day beyond those included in the budget; this would provide enough service hours to have a vehicle dedicated to each zone across the entire service day improving the availability of service in all zones. This increase in service hours is expected to cost approximately \$52,000 for the remainder of the pilot.
- 2. Should there continue to be a high number of trip denials, additional service hours could be added in Zone 1 (Centre Wellington) where 47% of trips currently take place. This would add capacity to this zone and could help address unaccommodated trips in the busiest zones while ensuring access and equity across the entire County. The addition of one vehicle in Zone 1 during mid-day (approximately seven and a half hours) is expected to cost approximately \$6,000 per month. Staff will monitor the service over the summer/fall and if deemed necessary, Committee will have the opportunity to reallocate vehicle hours for the remainder of the pilot.



3. Add funding to conduct additional marketing to promote the increase in service availability. This should only be implemented if additional vehicles are added beyond the seven budgeted hours. Marketing costs are expected to be between \$5,000 and \$10,000.

While the recommended service model includes extended service hours, it is not recommended that additional funding be used to support added weekend or evening service at this time. This is due to the following three reasons:

- 1. There is a need to improve the reliability of the service within the existing service hours before extending hours to other time periods or service areas.
- 2. Given the funding uncertainty starting in March 2025, it is not recommended to add service in the short-term which may be removed in 2025. Therefore, more review is required regarding the cost of long term operations and available funding options before moving forward with extended service.
- 3. Adding weekend service could require a significant increase in operators, and recruitment may take up a substantial portion of the time remaining in the pilot.

Long-Term (to be included in 2025 service plan)

The long-term service plan will build off the short-term improvements identified and align with the vision and mission of transit service within the County. The plan will be developed over the summer and presented to Council in September 2024. It will provide direction for what the service should look like beginning in March 2025, when the Community Transportation Grand funding officially ends. The recommendations which will be outlined in the 2025 long-term service plan will be dependent on funding details from federal and provincial grants and potential partnerships with local municipalities.

Some potential options that could be explored during this period include the following:

- Develop a plan for fixed route service along the Highway 6 corridor complimenting and/or replacing portions of the GOST service to provide more frequent and reliable service and increase opportunities for ride sharing. It is important to note that the future of the Guelph Owen Sound Transit (GOST) that is provided along Highway 6 in Wellington County is not guaranteed because of similar funding pressures resulting from the elimination of provincial operating subsidies for rural transportation. There is a risk that the demand for this service could exceed the capacity of the existing vehicles, and therefore, the service plan will investigate the use of a larger vehicle long term.
- 2. Explore options for the procurement and operation of an accessible transit vehicle. The capital cost of a wheelchair accessible vehicle is expected to cost between \$90,000 and \$275,000 depending on the vehicle type.
- Explore the cost-benefit of having a designated service within Centre Wellington with the Township. A partnership could support a long-term financially sustainable solution.



4.2

- 4. Increase service hours to provide connectivity to GO Rail at departure and arrival times, improving connectivity and access to the County from the Greater Golden Horseshoe.
- 5. Review existing and planned GO Transit services and recommend connections to neighbouring urban centres such as Kitchener-Waterloo.
- 6. Identify opportunities to reduce Ride Well travel within Guelph while maintaining access to key destinations. For ambulatory passengers, connections to Guelph Transit or GO Transit may facilitate these connections. This will reduce service duplication and, therefore, operational costs.
- 7. Explore modifications to fare structure to reflect rising costs, making the service more financially sustainable in the long term.



Appendix A

Staff Consultation Presentation - April 30, 2024



Agenda



• **Purpose:** Review key County plans and policies that may benefit from the provision of transit and identify any uncaptured objectives that reflect the ongoing County work.

Background and Context

- Initial objectives of Ride Well and how they have changed
- Council Workshop Overview

Policy Review Outcomes

- Outline the six outcomes identified through the policy review
- Discussion

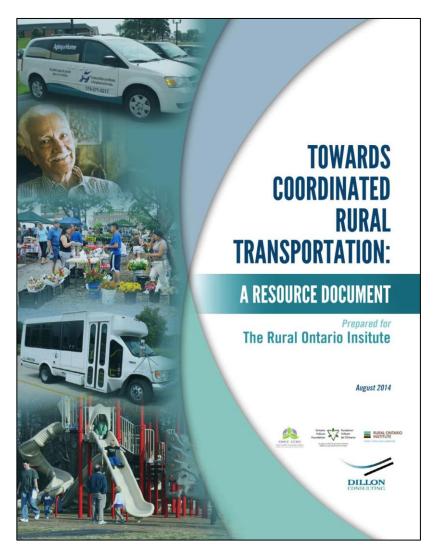
Next Steps Next Steps



Ride Well Story Begins in 2015

Key Outcomes

- Challenges of implementing Rural transit
- Identify mobility gaps
- Process to improve coordination and service models to implement service





Identify Values and Needs

Economic Development

- Attract employees to a growing auto-supply industry
- Keep local business thriving
- Attract new employers to the County

Social Services

- Provide transportation to seniors and low-income residents
- Provide mobility to the various programs they support

Political

Provide some level of service to each was essential







Funding Grant Opportunity Fuels More Discussion

- Opportunity to apply for Ontario Community Transportation Fund
- Provides \$500,000 in operating funds over 5 years to pilot a transportation service
- Met with community stakeholders to assess existing services, identify mobility gaps and opportunities to form partnerships
- Support for moving forward





Ride Well Today

Success!

- Awarded grant application (\$125,000 per year over 4 years)
- Launched October 2019
- Funding extended to March 2025

Challenge:

- Funding was enough to cover only a small portion of the transportation needs
- COVID-19 Pandemic!!





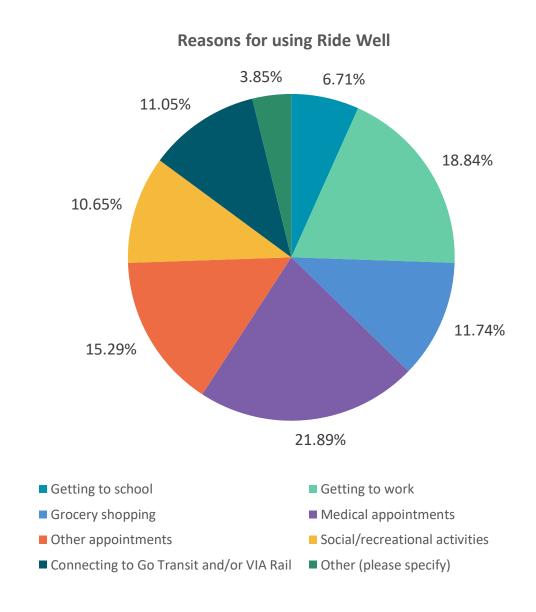
Ride Well Today

- Door-to-door service within the County; connections to Guelph
- Use up to four non-accessible sedans
- Separate contract with Fergus Taxi for accessible rides
- Service from 6:00am to 7:00pm
- Fare by distance: \$5 to \$40 one-way
- Funding extended to March 2025





Feedback



Ride Well has proven to be successful, providing an increasing number of trips each year to residents.

The goals of providing a service to all residents and connecting residents to education, employment and services both locally and in Guelph have been achieved.

Residents are using the service for all types of trips, including travel to social engagements, improving the quality of life for residents.

Changing Goals

- As the service grows, so does the strain on resources. Survey feedback revealed that the availability of service was one of the main desired improvements to the service
- The Strategic Action Plan was updated last year outlining the direction for the next four years
- A sustainable long-term solution for Ride Well must be identified. The existing service model and the goals of the Ride Well service may need to be updated to reflect these changing conditions



Council Workshop

- March 19 Economic Development Committee the Committee directed staff to facilitate a workshop for County Council with the purpose of identifying the mission, values and future direction of the Ride Well service
- Workshop planned for May 16. Council members will be asked to prioritize the strategic directions discussed today – and the role transit should play in achieving each
- Based on this prioritization, recommended service characteristics consistent with the high priority strategic directions will be presented and tradeoffs will be discussed to refine the goals for future transit service in the County



Access and Equity

Economic Development

Community Safety

Growth Management

Environmental Sustainability

Financial
Sustainability
(Service Cost)



Access and Equity

Equity is a common need for public transportation networks, ensuring that people with multiple backgrounds and living in different areas can *make critical connections to County services, health, education other* major destinations. Access to transit as a daily service can maintain mobility for residents without access to vehicles. Supporting goals and statements in municipal plans include:

- "Wellington County residents rely on the County for a wide range of services, each of which is critical to the daily functioning of the community. If the County is to manage growth in a positive way and harness its potential, the Corporation will need to continue to deliver the necessary daily services for its residents as those requirements expand. If critical daily services do not maintain their standard of excellence, then the residents of the County will suffer." Strategic Action Plan
- "Provide sustainable and equitable mobility options that connect communities." Roads Master Action Plan
- "Individual and community wellness is promoted and maintained by addressing the underlying causes of social issues
 through upstream approaches. This includes opportunities for employment, income, adequate housing, access to
 education and other supports that promote social and economic inclusion." Community Safety and Well-Being Plan

Related departments and offices: Social Services, Wellington Terrace, Library, Planning and Development, Public Health, Museum and Archives



Economic Development

Easier access to affordable and widely accessible transit improves *access to employment*, making Wellington County a *desirable location for large employers*. The Roads Master Action Plan identified that transportation changes should be supportive of furthering economic development. Ride Well was initially started with the intent of connecting people to jobs, and this would still be an important component of any future changes to the system.

Related departments and offices: Economic Development



Growth Management

As Wellington County continues to grow, focusing growth in compact areas is essential for sustainably managing the boundary of urban centres. Complete communities in urban centres allow for people to *minimize dependency on personal vehicles for travel*, which in the long term minimize the need to invest excessively in road infrastructure. Transit between urban centres further enable reduced dependency on personal vehicles, *providing choice to residents* and more efficient travel. Supporting goals and statements in municipal plans include:

- "To take advantage of capacities in existing and planned...transportation systems to support the achievement of complete communities through a more compact built form." Official Plan
- "To encourage growth in primary and secondary urban centres." Official Plan
- "Be proactive in planning for future expansion of the County Road network based on Complete Streets principles while considering the quality of life of residents." – Roads Master Action Plan
- "Reducing dependency on cars also increases opportunity for daily physical activity benefiting the health and wellness of users by lowering risks of diabetes, obesity and heart disease." Future Focused Climate Mitigation Plan

Related departments and offices: Roads and Bridges, Social Services, Planning and Development



Environmental Sustainability

Wellington County has a series of climate-focused goals to *minimize the long-term impact of emissions and environmental damage* in the spirit of conservation. Public transit is one component that may be able to contribute to minimizing negative environmental impacts. Supporting goals and statements in municipal plans include:

- "Climate-friendly transportation actions such as designing "complete neighbourhoods" address the need to connect residents, particularly those with lower income or are unable to drive, to essential services and accessible food sources through affordable transportation, safe pedestrian and cycling routes and shared transportation (e.g. ride-sharing and buses)." Future Focused Climate Mitigation Plan
- "Reducing use of internal combustion engine vehicles improves air quality by reducing airborne pollutants reducing risk of air-quality related illnesses such as asthma." Future Focused Climate Mitigation Plan
- "To support a culture of conservation, including...energy and...air quality protection." Official Plan

Related departments and offices: Roads and Bridges, Social Services, Planning and Development



Community Safety

Public transit can contribute to community safety, by providing a *safe and reliable way to travel* within and between municipalities in a more equitable way. The perception of safety on public transit is important, and different implementations of public transit may be perceived as more or less safe than other implementations. Supporting goals and statements in municipal plans include:

- "Create a transportation network with a focus on safety" Roads Master Action Plan
- "Coordinate efforts with all seven municipalities to create an action plan to improve the safety of vulnerable road users" Community Safety and Well-Being Plan

Related departments and offices: Police Services, Public Health



Discussion/Questions

Keeping in mind that the current model for Ride Well could change:

- 1. Are you expecting that transit will become a larger role in future policy direction for the County?
- 2. Are there other broader municipal goals where you believe transit can be part of the larger solution?



Next Steps

- Council workshop
- Develop a vision and mission for transit service
- Identify service models which align with the vision and mission and the tradeoffs discussed with Council
- Report and presentation to Committee of Council June 18th, seeking approval on further development of a concept model
- Service options will be further developed to define the expected ridership and costs and will be presented to Council in September



Appendix B

Pre-read Package for Council Workshop -May 16, 2024



Ride Well Service Plan Council Workshop - Pre-Read Package

Introduction

The following package provides information on Wellington County's Ride Well service for the purpose of preparing members of Council for a Public Transit Vision Working Session that will take place on May 16, 2024.

The package contains the following:

- An overview of Ride Well's history;
- Policy directions from the County that impact Ride Well's design;
- How Ride Well is performing against its goals; and
- Strategic themes identified in the County's plans and policies.

An agenda for the working session and a list of other transportation services that operate in or through Wellington County are also attached. We would request that for an informed discussion, Council read this package prior to the working session so you can have all the information you need to make an informed decision.

Ride Well History and Observations

Wellington County covers a large geographic area of 2,569 km² with a population of 100,800 residents.

Addressing mobility issues for Wellington County residents has been an ongoing discussion for over a decade. In 2015, the County participated in a report by the Rural Ontario Institute called "Coordinated Rural Transportation", in which the County was identified as a case study that could be addressed through coordinated rural transportation. In 2018, additional communication occurred to address the lack of a public mobility solution in the County, which is made more difficult due to the sparsely distributed population (100,800) over a large geographic area (2,569 km²). Based on these engagement sessions and studies the following transportation issues were noted:

- Local large employers within the County expressed significant concerns about attracting and retaining employees due to a lack of publicly accessible transportation options, and
- Community care transportation does not meet demand and is focused on seniors and persons
 with disabilities. Mobility of residents who do not have access to private vehicles might have
 their mobility limited. At the same time, they have been facing challenges in recruiting volunteer
 drivers; and
- Private sector mobility providers are limited and expensive for frequent use.

To help address these issues, the County applied for the Community Transportation Grant Programme from the Ontario Ministry of Transportation and was successful. The five-year funding provided was



used to develop a pilot County-wide on-demand transit service called Ride Well, which was officially launched on October 1, 2019. The service uses rideshare solutions from a technology company called RideCo, which also contracts service to individual drivers who use their own vehicles to deliver service. This pilot project has the following objectives:

- Better understand how many people are interested in working but are limited by lack of transit;
- Attract newcomers considering moving to Wellington but either unable to purchase a vehicle, pay the high costs of taxis or ride a bicycle to their place of employment or study;
- Provide mobility to residents of Wellington County to access employment, education, services and medical needs;
- Address the labour force needs of employers in the County by providing connections to key industries;
- Promote additional connections to employment, services, and specialist medical appointments in Guelph; and
- Provide existing community care agencies with access to a mobile app to improve the effectiveness of existing resources.

The funding provided through this grant programme was extended by two years, largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and is expected to end in March 2025. With the conclusion of funding, Wellington County must identify whether it would like to continue to move forward with the Ride Well programme and, if so, what the service should look like.

It should be noted that if the County decided to move forward with a permanent transit service, it would be eligible to receive provincial gas tax dollars to help funding the service, however, this would be a lower amount than current funding through the Community Transportation Grant Programme.

In the 2024 Ontario Budget, the Ontario Transit Investment Fund (OTIF) was announced. This will be annual funding of \$5 million to deliver local and intercommunity transportation projects in unserved and underserved areas of Ontario. It will include an ongoing application-based intake with eligibility that includes municipalities, indigenous communities, and non-profit organizations. There are currently no additional details released about the fund released by the Province.

Policy Directions

There have been several studies and reviews of the Ride Well service completed by County departments. The overall direction from each report are identified below.

Road Master Action Plan

A number of alternate options have been reviewed over the term of the pilot. In particular the County's Road Master Action Plan evaluated four service options for Ride Well in 2021. These include:

- A continuation of the on-demand service;
- Partnerships with ridesharing companies and local taxi operators;
- A fixed-route service along key corridors in Wellington County; and/or



Continued funding of eligibility-based on-demand services.

Through the evaluation, the primary recommendations were to:

- Increase the number of vehicles and service hours on the on-demand service;
- Reduce fares for long trips, groups, and frequent passengers;
- Allow in-app trip bookings for on-demand, fixed-route, and non-dedicated vehicles;
- Continue coordinating with eligibility-based on-demand services (e.g., Community Care) while reducing funding to those services;
- Seek federal and provincial funding opportunities to support operating costs (including provincial gas tax funding and the federal Rural Transit Solutions Fund);
- Work with RideCo to integrate Ride Well with GOST service, to focus on shorter on-demand trips;
- Establish fixed-route service on Highway 6 between Mount Forest and Guelph, with on-demand trips feeding into that service;
- Explore purchasing accessible electric vehicles to be leased to the operator; and
- Work with the City of Guelph and the Region of Waterloo to explore fixed-route service between Guelph and Kitchener, with opportunities for Ride Well to integrate with that service.

Operational Reviews of the Ride Well Service

In 2023, an Operational Review of Ride Well Service was completed at which time further increases to the amount of service being provided was recommended, increasing the number of hours per day to 38 hours. In addition, a partnership with transportation network companies was recommended to fulfill trips which were unable to be accommodated due to unexpected driver absences. As the number of hours continued to increase RideCo, the contractor responsible for service operations, was experiencing difficulty in recruiting and maintaining drivers. As such, they requested an increase in the hourly rate. The Ride Well service was reviewed as part of the Ride Well Contract, Fare and Service Strategy Review to identify if a change to the operating model could reduce the number of kilometers each driver operates and therefore reduce the increasing cost of operations. At this time a zonal structure was presented as an option.

As the end of the pilot approached, residents were provided with an online survey. The results of this survey and the most recent ridership data were presented to the Economic Development Committee on March 19th as an Interim Report for the development of the 2025 Service Plan.

System Performance

Ride Well provides trips across the County to riders of all ages and abilities. The following map shows the destinations to which more than 10 trips were destined between January and April 2024. The darker markers demote a higher number of trips during this period.





Figure 1: Map of Popular Destinations (January to April 2024)

This map shows the density of trips within Elora and Fergus. Approximately 40% of trips operate within Centre Wellington which accounts for the highest number of Ride Well rides. Centre Wellington has been operating seasonal shuttles and has experienced high levels of ridership on this service, which connects Elora and Fergus. Due to the increasing demand and success of the seasonal shuttle Centre Wellington has put forth an application for a transit feasibility study through Rural Transit Solutions Fund. Township staff indicated their desire to work closely with the County to assess potential future transportation solutions for Centre Wellington.

The map also shows several non-residential locations that receive frequent service from the Ride Well project. The top-5 non-residential locations are as follows:

- 1. Tower Street Commercial Plaza (with Giant Tiger, Mark's, and Pet Valu) Fergus, ON
- 2. Wellington Road 7 Commercial Plaza (with Subway, Hear Right Canada, and Hilltop Variety) Elora, ON
- Speedvale Avenue Commercial Plaza (with Make It Sew Embroidery, Krella Fireplaces, and All About Grooming) – Guelph, ON
- 4. Guelph Central Station Guelph, ON
- 5. Massasauga Imports Erin, ON



Most of these locations likely indicate frequent usage of Ride Well to get to a place of employment.

Ridership on the service continues to grow; the chart below shows the ridership growth between 2019 and 2024. The majority of these trips (83% in 2024) were completed by adults.

Monthly Riders on Completed Trips 1200 1000 800 600 400 200 0 Oct-19 Apr-20 Nov-20 May-21 Dec-21 Jun-22 Jan-23 Aug-23 Feb-24

Figure 2: Ridership Growth 2019 to 2024

Staff recognize the untapped demand as recent survey data indicated that over 42% of respondents had not heard of Ride Well services. However, while there is significant potential demand, the growth of Ride Well is limited by resource availability. During the same survey, over 25% of respondents identified that Ride Well service was not convenient enough. A review of trip data showed that on average 19% of customers were unable to book a trip at their requested travel time due to high demand.

The 2025 Service Plan Interim report identified that peer agencies providing fixed route connections between high-density communities attract significantly more riders and that there may be an opportunity to change the service model to meet the demands of the County in the future. The results of this peer survey are included in the attached **Table 2**.

Workshop Purpose

At the March 19 meeting, the Economic Development Committee directed staff to facilitate a workshop for County Council with the purpose of identifying the mission, values and future direction of the Ride Well service. These details will provide a framework on which the 2025 service plan and short term operational improvements of the existing service will be developed.

During this workshop you will be asked to consider the following strategic directions, compiled from existing policies and plans and prioritize the role that transit can play in achieving them. Based on this



prioritization, recommended service characteristics consistent with the high-priority strategic directions will be presented, and trade-offs will be discussed to refine the goals and transit service model elements which may best serve the County moving forward.

Strategic Directions

A review of Wellington County's policies and plans was conducted to determine how public transit may align with county-wide goals, resulting in six main strategic directions with which service changes could be evaluated:

- Access and equity
- 2. Economic development
- 3. Financial sustainability
- 4. Growth management
- 5. Environmental sustainability
- 6. Community safety

To prepare for the workshop, Dillon spoke with key staff within departments that referenced transportation in their strategies., it was noted that transportation is a key component to achieving each of the above directions.

Access and Equity

Equity is a common need for public transportation networks, ensuring that people with multiple backgrounds and living in different areas can make critical connections to County services and major destinations. Access to transit as a daily service can maintain mobility for residents without access to vehicles.

While discussing equity with County staff, one important message rang clear: "Equity is being able to choose transportation that works for you." Providing diverse transportation options that work for people of different backgrounds and who are at different stages of life supports all community members. Ride Well makes up one portion of this overall solution.

Goals and statements from municipal plans, supporting access and equity include:

- "Wellington County residents rely on the County for a wide range of services, each of which is critical to the daily functioning of the community. If the County is to manage growth in a positive way and harness its potential, the Corporation will need to continue to deliver the necessary daily services for its residents as those requirements expand. If critical daily services do not maintain their standard of excellence, then the residents of the County will suffer." Strategic Action Plan
- "Provide sustainable and equitable mobility options that connect communities." Roads Master
 Action Plan



"Individual and community wellness is promoted and maintained by addressing the underlying
causes of social issues through upstream approaches. This includes opportunities for employment,
income, adequate housing, access to education and other supports that promote social and
economic inclusion." – Community Safety and Well-Being Plan

In addition, staff noted that transit is supporting ongoing projects focused on circular economy and food access by connecting people and goods. Social Services is working on a Community Health and Housing Plan which is expected to include transit solutions to connect persons to community shelters and affordable rental housing.

Related departments and offices: Social Services, Wellington Terrace, Library, Planning and Development, Public Health, Museum and Archives

Economic Development

Easier access to affordable and widely accessible transit improves access to employment, making Wellington County a desirable location for large employers. The Roads Master Action Plan identified that transportation changes should support further economic development. Ride Well was initially started with the intent of connecting people to jobs, and this would still be an important component of any future changes to the system.

A brief analysis of trips across February revealed that more than 40% of passengers who completed a trip using Ride Well more than 3 times per week were using the service to commute to their job. Other trip purposes are included in the figure below:

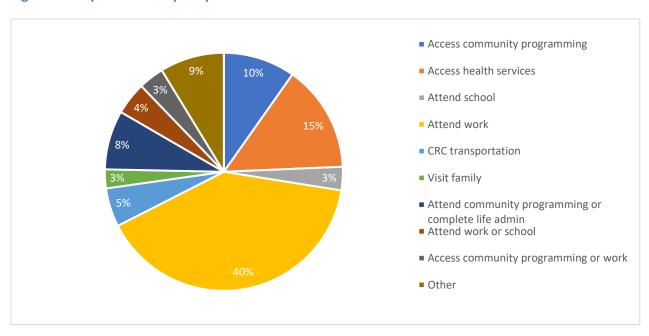


Figure 3: Frequent User Trip Purposes

Figure 3 shows the general usage description for customers that have booked 3 or more rides per week on average since January 2024. 40% of these customers are using Ride Well to get to work, while



another 15% are using the service to access health services. Finally, 8% of these trips come from the Community Resource Centre of North and Centre Wellington (CRC), who are booking rides for multiple clients from one account. The following table describes the CRC usage in more detail:

Number of Passengers	Number of Unique		
rassengers	Clients	Percentage	Туре
255	11	71.0%	Education
39	10	10.9%	Food bank/clothing closet/hampers
13	6	3.6%	Groceries/banking/other daily living
12	1	3.3%	EarlyON programming
12	3	3.3%	Employment Services
12	7	3.3%	Medical
6	3	1.7%	Legal
5	2	1.4%	Family Visitation
2	2	0.6%	Housing/shelter
2	1	0.6%	Income taxes
1	1	0.3%	Work shifts

In total, the CRC has serviced 40 clients with 359 rides from January 2023 to March 2024. The majority of these rides have been for young adults accessing education services.

Staff identified that persons being supported by social assistance qualify for benefits to support transportation but that in some case these benefits are no longer available as the person starts working. The affordability of transportation is a key piece in encouraging people to transition into the workforce.

Related departments and offices: Economic Development

Growth Management

As Wellington County continues to grow, focusing growth in compact areas is essential for sustainably managing the boundary of urban centres. Complete communities in urban centres allow for people to minimize dependency on personal vehicles for travel, which in the long term minimize the need to invest excessively in road infrastructure. Transit between urban centres further enable reduced dependency on personal vehicles, providing choice to residents and more efficient travel. Supporting goals and statements in municipal plans include:

- "To take advantage of capacities in existing and planned...transportation systems to support the achievement of complete communities through a more compact built form." Official Plan
- "To encourage growth in primary and secondary urban centres." Official Plan
- "Be proactive in planning for future expansion of the County Road network based on Complete Streets principles while considering the quality of life of residents." Roads Master Action Plan
- "Reducing dependency on cars also increases opportunity for daily physical activity benefiting the health and wellness of users by lowering risks of diabetes, obesity and heart disease." – Future Focused Climate Mitigation Plan



Revisions to the Official Plan are expected to continue to prioritize urban growth and create permanency and transit-focused community design.

While all members of the community can benefit from transit, it is noted that as Wellington continues to grow, the relative portion of seniors is expected to increase, as shown in the chart below. This population benefits from transit at a higher level as it fosters safe, accessible, and independent travel as seniors become unable to drive.

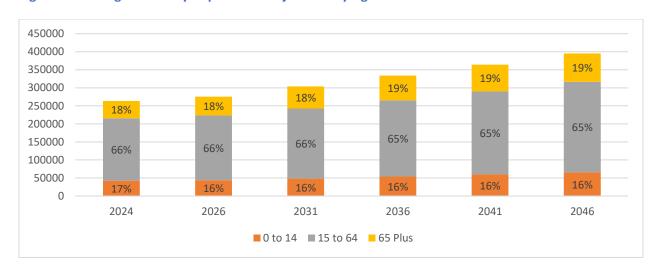


Figure 4: Wellington County Population Projections by Age

Related departments and offices: Roads and Bridges, Social Services, Planning and Development

Environmental Sustainability

Wellington County has a series of climate-focused goals to minimize the long-term impact of emissions and environmental damage in the spirit of conservation. Public transit is one component that may be able to contribute to minimizing negative environmental impacts. Supporting goals and statements in municipal plans include:

- "Climate-friendly transportation actions such as designing "complete neighbourhoods" address the
 need to connect residents, particularly those with lower income or are unable to drive, to essential
 services and accessible food sources through affordable transportation, safe pedestrian and cycling
 routes and shared transportation (e.g. ride-sharing and buses)." Future Focused Climate
 Mitigation Plan
- "Reducing use of internal combustion engine vehicles improves air quality by reducing airborne
 pollutants reducing risk of air-quality related illnesses such as asthma." Future Focused Climate
 Mitigation Plan
- "To support a culture of conservation, including...energy and...air quality protection." Official Plan

Staff also indicated that continued road expansions are limited due to encroachment on agricultural property which can have adverse environmental impacts. Studies are showing that internal combustion



engines are also impacting nighttime pollinators and, therefore, agricultural production. Identifying shared ride transportation solutions which reduce the number of internal combustion engines being used daily can help to reduce this impact. The current service model of Ride Well includes significant deadheading between passengers (time when there are no passengers in the vehicle), which is not an environmentally conscious model.

Related departments and offices: Roads and Bridges, Social Services, Planning and Development

Community Safety

Public transit can contribute to community safety, by providing a safe and reliable way to travel within and between municipalities in a more equitable way. The perception of safety on public transit is important, and different implementations of public transit may be perceived as more or less safe than other implementations. Supporting goals and statements in municipal plans include:

"Create a transportation network with a focus on safety" - Roads Master Action Plan

"Coordinate efforts with all seven municipalities to create an action plan to improve the safety of vulnerable road users" – Community Safety and Well-Being Plan

County staff indicated that fewer cars on the road generally makes for a safer commute. By offering an affordable and reliable transportation service, drivers who are generally nervous, unable to drive in adverse weather conditions or who are reaching a point where their ability to perceive hazards and react quickly is reduced, have the option to shift their mode choice and maintain their independence. This can also help with the personal safety of residents by allowing them to connect to local resources and supports through changing conditions.

In addition, they identified that communicating with your neighbours can encourage a greater sense of community which can maintain the "small town feel" of the County and can make people feel safer knowing those they are riding with.

Related departments and offices: Police Services, Public Health

Financial Sustainability

Any transit system should be financially sustainable to be able to continue to be provided in the longer term, without placing an excessive financial burden on the County. Supporting goals and statements in municipal plans include:

- "Ensure long-term financial sustainability to allow for the continued delivery of the highest quality service" – Strategic Action Plan
- "Be fiscally-responsible when making investment decisions" Roads Master Action Plan

While transit on its own can not improve the County's overall financial sustainability, it can help reduce the cost of several other initiatives, including trips funded through Ontario Works and the Rural Transportation Fund, where taxis make up a large portion of the trips. In addition, transit can reduce the



cost and impact of expanding roadways and parking lots, as it can help utilize existing roadways more efficiently.

Related departments and offices: Treasury, Economic Development, Planning and Development

Wellington County Transportation Services

Like most rural counties, Wellington County has limited mobility options for residents and employers that do not have access to a private automobile. Part of this is due to the nature of the County, with low density development and long-distance travel that does not support shared rides. The options that do exist are often not coordinated with each other and/or are restricted to certain demographic groups within the County.

These services, listed in the table attached include:

- Ride Well, a pilot county-wide on-demand public transit solution operated by RideCo and funded by the County and the Ministry of Transportation Ontario (through the Community Transportation Grant programme);
- Charter or shuttle-based services;
- Eligibility-based services, often targeted toward seniors or people with disabilities;
- Taxis and ride hailing services (Uber) that tend to be focused on specific locations in the County; and
- Fixed-route public transit services, operating at an inter-regional scale, with local connections to stops or between communities within the County.



Table 1: Services Operating in Wellington County

Service	Service Area	Category	Details	Limitations	
Ride Well	County-wide	Public transit (on-demand)	A pilot rural transit operated by RideCo, funded by the County and MTO	Fares are calculated at \$0.60 per km with a minimum fare of \$5.00 for shared ride service.	
GO Transit	Rockwood, Aberfoyle	Public transit (fixed-route)	Provincial bus service from Aberfoyle and Rockwood to Guelph, Toronto, Mississauga, Hamilton, and Waterloo	Limited stops within the County	
GOST (Guelph Owen Sound Transit)	Mount Forest, Arthur, Fergus, Elora	Public transit (fixed-route)	Daily pilot fixed-route service between Owen Sound and Guelph with stops in Mount Forest, Arthur, Fergus and Elora	Limited service, 2 round trips per day	
Uber	County-wide	Premium on- demand service	On-demand service	Drivers are generally focused on the southern portion of the County surrounding Guelph	
Listowel Taxi	Mapleton, Wellington North, Minto (licenced county-wide)	Taxi	Taxi service	Rates are approximately \$2.25 per kilometer when departing Listowel	
Fergus Elora Taxi	Fergus to/from other locations (licenced county-wide)	Taxi	Taxi service	Rates between Fergus and Elora are approximately \$15, with fares increasing by distance	



VON (Victorian Order of Nurses for Canada)	County-wide	Eligibility- based accessible service	Transportation for seniors and adults with disabilities to medical appointments, grocery shopping, adult day programmes, or to run errands.	Trips are limited to seniors and adults with disabilities	
East Wellington Community Services	Erin, Guelph/Eramosa	Eligibility- based service	Door-to-door transportation for eligible adults over 18	Passengers must be eligible for community services programmes	
Wellington Transportation Services (Community Resource Centre)	Centre Wellington, Wellington North, Minto, Mapleton	Eligibility- based service	Volunteer service for eligible passengers to get to medical appointments, work, grocery shopping, legal duties, and other errands (uses Ride Well for overflow)	Passengers must have no other means of transportation and be on a low income	
Driverseat Wellington Dufferin Caledon	County-wide	Charter / shuttle and eligibility- based service	Shuttle service based in Arthur for airport travel, weddings, employment. General travel for seniors, people with COVID, and injured individuals.	Vehicles are pre-booked for group trips or travel to the airport. Shuttles to appointments are reserved for vulnerable individuals.	
Denny's Bus Lines	County-wide	Charter / shuttle	Based in Erin, previously offering commuter service to Guelph	Vehicles are pre-booked for group trips.	
Red Car Service	Centre Wellington, Guelph/Eramosa, Puslinch	Charter / shuttle	Guelph-based airport travel and other charter bookings.	Airport shuttles are in excess of \$80 for a single passenger, all other charters must be booked in advance	



Table 2: Peer Review Summary

Average Monthly Indicators	County of Wellington	Brant County	Perth County	Middlesex County	Norfolk County	Grey County
Statistical Year	2023	2022	2022	2023	2023	2023
Service Type	Door to Door On Demand	Door to Door On Demand	Fixed Route	Fixed Route	Stop to Stop On Demand	Fixed Route
Service Area Size (sq. km)	2,665	818	2,218	3,318	1,648	4,498
Service Area Population	103,010	39,474	81,565	40,706	32,500	100,905
Revenue Vehicle Hours	659	1,684	475	330	490	1,673
Ridership	775	1,998	950	321	1,396	2,333
Ridership per Capita	0.007	0.051	0.012	0.008	0.043	0.023
Ridership per Revenue Vehicle Hour	1.177	1.187	2.001	0.970	2.851	1.394
Revenue Vehicle Hour per Capita	0.006	0.043	0.006	0.008	0.015	0.017
Passenger Revenue	\$6,280	\$7,500	\$5,250	\$1,550	\$4,994	\$5,250
Total Direct Operating Expense	\$23,815	\$62,500	\$44,000	N/A	\$44,904	\$84,691
Net Direct Operating Cost	\$15,232	\$55,000	\$38,750	N/A	\$39,910	\$79,441
Direct Operating Cost per Rider	\$25.50	\$37.28	\$46.32	N/A	\$32.17	\$36.30
Direct Operating Cost per Revenue Vehicle Hour	\$30.00	\$37.12	\$92.70	N/A	\$91.72	\$50.61
Revenue to Cost Ratio	23%	12%	12%	N/A	11%	6%

Appendix C

Council Workshop Presentation – May 16, 2024



Purpose

Study Purpose

- Identify improvements to the service prior to end of funding in March 2025
- Identify a sustainable long-term solution for RIDE WELL (what comes after the pilot

Meeting Purpose

- Inform the future direction of RIDE WELL
- Clarify Council's vision for the role of transit in the County
- Understand current needs and policy direction
- Review service design options and trade offs that align to the vision for transit



Agenda

Where We've Been

- Why is rural transit important?
- Past, present and future of Ride Well
- Q+A, lessons learned

Where We're At

• Collaborative brainstorming: What are the most pressing issues and needs related to rural transportation today?

BREAK

Where We're Going

- Service model options
- Transit trade-offs
- The role of transit
- Next steps







Where We've Been



Benefits of Rural Transit

- Provide mobility to a growing and aging population
- Address housing affordability concerns with rising cost of living
- Provide access to employment, training and education
- Provide opportunities for youth and improve mental health
- Increase economic development (e.g. new warehousing plants moving to the region)
- Reduce social isolation and increase quality of life
- Access to hospitals and medical appointments

"I hope this program continues as it is invaluable to me as I wouldn't be able to visit with my sister (we are both seniors).... So, thank you for this essential service for seniors like us."

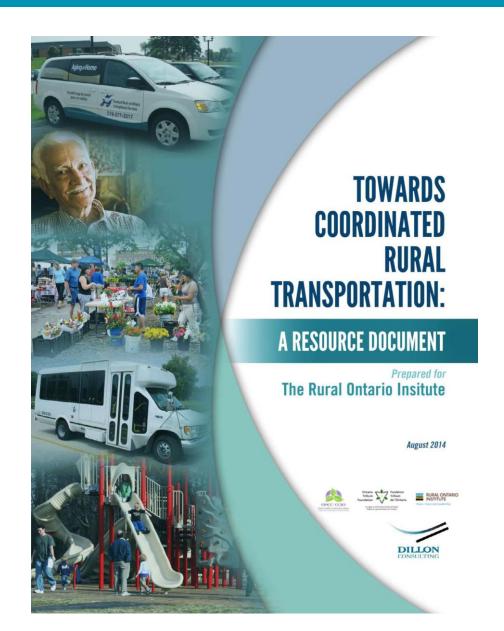
Anonymous



Ride Well Story Begins in 2015

Key Outcomes

- Challenges of implementing Rural transit
- Identify mobility gaps
- Process to improve coordination and service models to implement service





Identify Values and Needs

Economic Development

- Attract employees to a growing auto-supply industry
- Keep local business thriving
- Attract new employers to the County

Social Services

- Provide transportation to seniors and low-income residents
- Provide mobility to the various programs they support

Political

Provide some level of service to each was essential







Funding Grant Opportunity Fuels More Discussion



- Opportunity to apply for Ontario Community Transportation Fund
- Provideed \$500,000 in operating funds over 5 years to pilot a transportation service
- Met with community stakeholders to assess existing services, identify mobility gaps and opportunities to form partnerships
- Support for moving forward



Pilot Initiation

Success!

- Awarded grant application (\$125,000 per year over 4 years)
- Launched October 2019

Challenge:

- Funding was enough to cover only a small portion of the transportation needs
- COVID-19 Pandemic!!





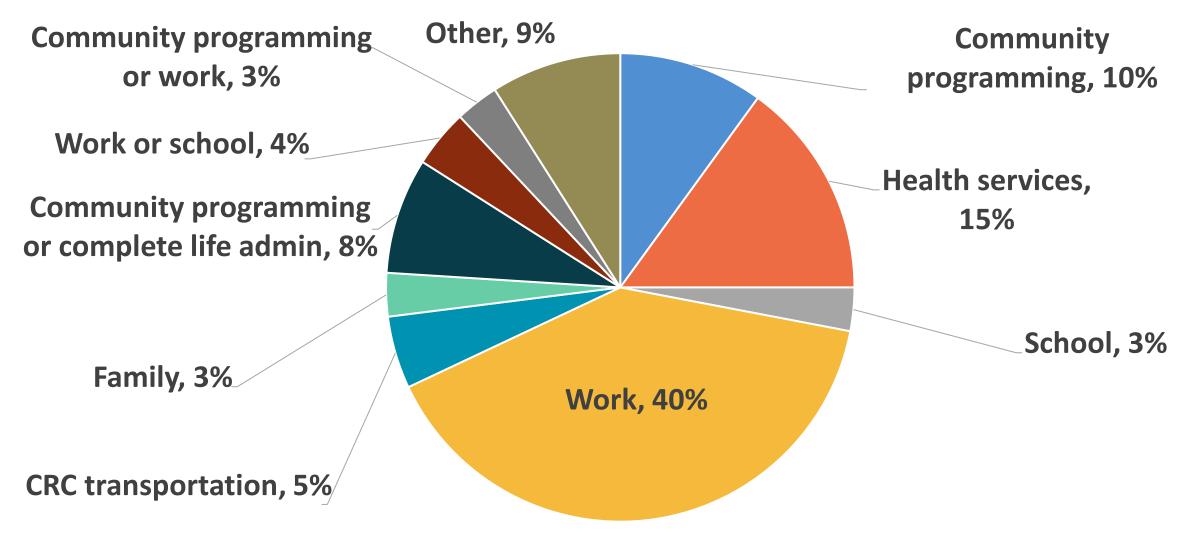
RIDE WELL Today

- Door-to-door service within the County; connections to Guelph
- Use up to four non-accessible sedans
- Separate contract with Fergus Taxi for accessible rides
- Service from 6:00am to 7:00pm
- Fare by distance: \$5 to \$40 oneway
- Funding extended to March 2025
- Additional \$227,196 in funding awarded in 2024 to finish the pilot



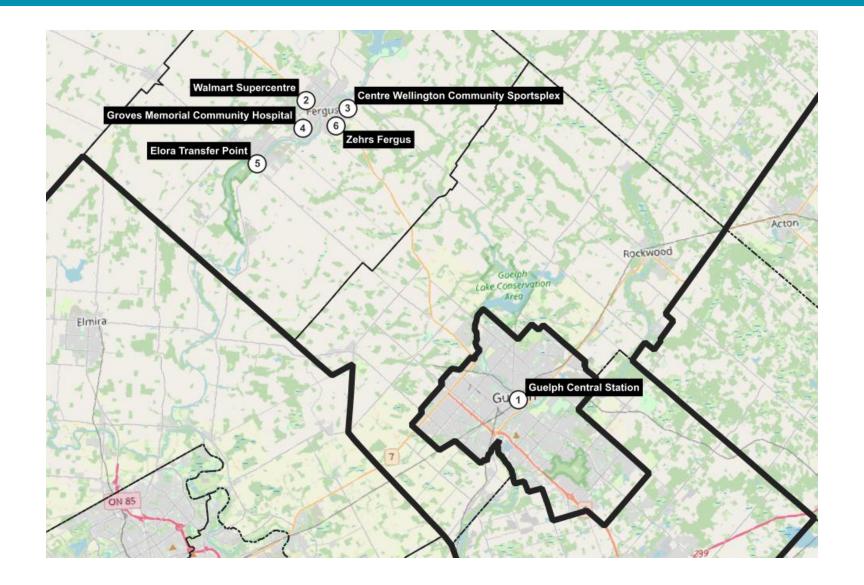


Reasons for Using RIDE WELL





Top Unique Destinations





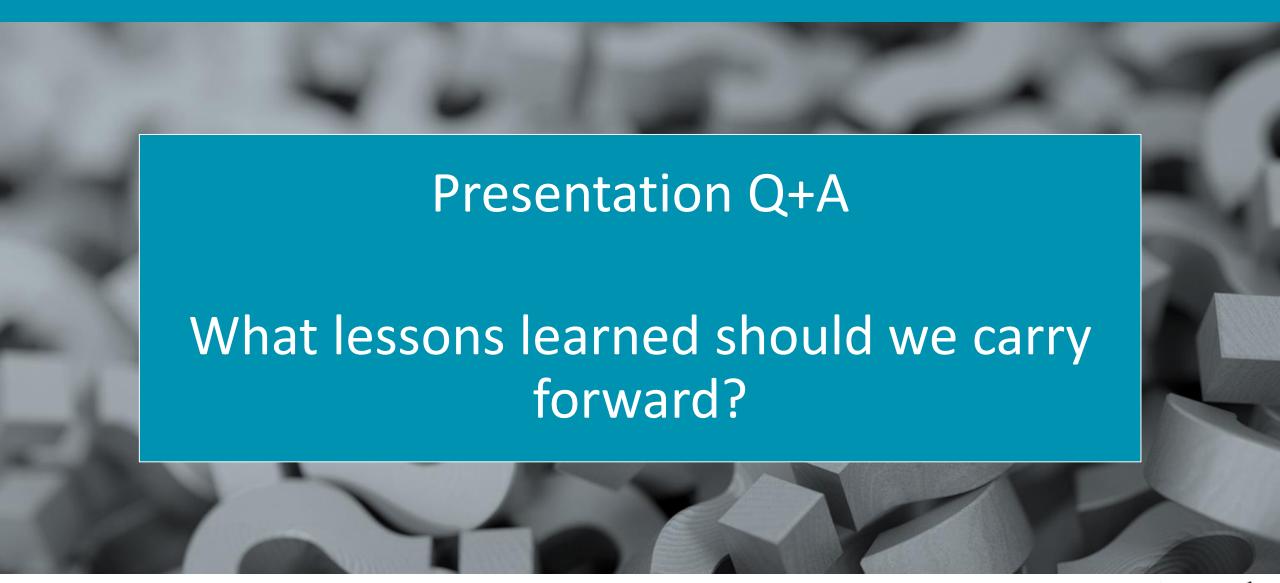
Changing Goals



- Growing service = strain on resources
- Desire for improved availability
- Need for sustainable, long-term solution
- May need to update service model



Discussion







Where We're At



Collaborative Brainstorm





Strategic Directions

Access and Equity

Economic Development

Community Safety

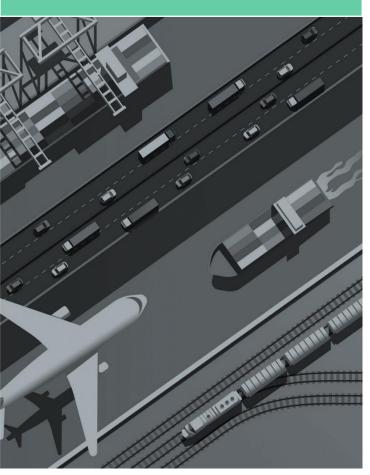
Growth Management

Environmental Sustainability

Financial
Sustainability
(Service Cost)



Access and Equity



- Diverse transportation options
- Critical connections to County services, health, education
- Daily service can maintain mobility for residents without access to vehicles
- RIDE WELL one part of the overall solution





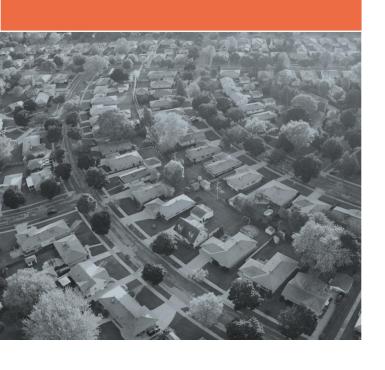
Economic Development



- 13% jobs increase by 2031
- Affordable, widely accessible transit improves access to employment
- Initial intent of RIDE WELL



Growth Management



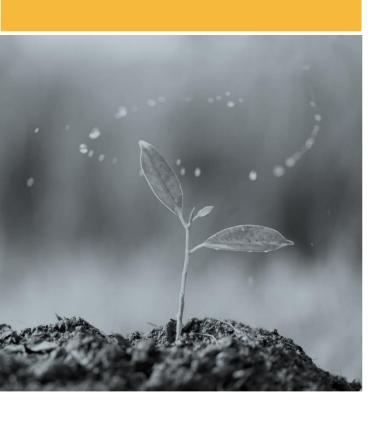
12% population increase by 2031

 Minimize dependency on personal vehicles

 Minimize need to invest excessively in road infrastructure



Environmental Sustainability



- Reduce emissions and environmental damage
- Minimize the number of vehicles
- Reduce agricultural impacts



Community Safety

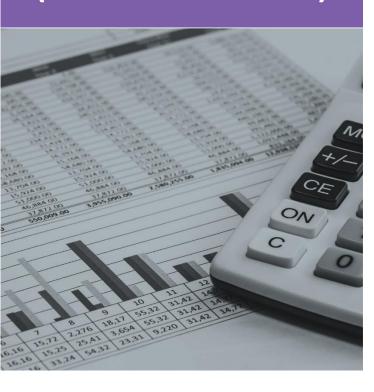


- Public transit safe and reliable
- Build community and perception of safety
- Fewer drivers = safer streets



Council Workshop

Financial Sustainability (Service Cost)



 Help reduce cost of other initiatives:

Transportation to community services

 Reducing the need for additional infrastructure



Discussion

How do the identified issues align with the strategic directions?

Access and Equity

Economic Development

Financial
Sustainability
(Service Cost)

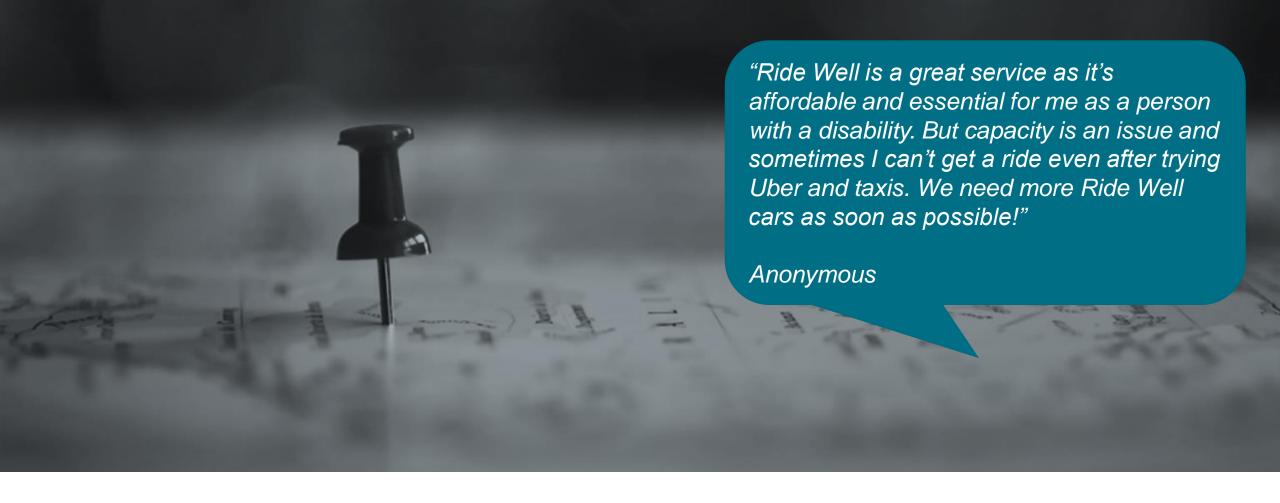
Growth Management

Environmental Sustainability

Community Safety



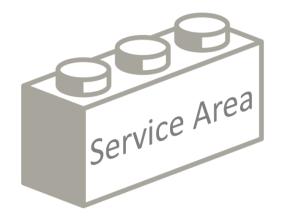


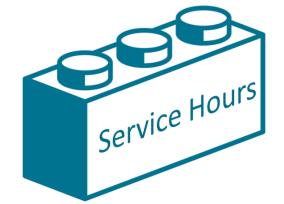


Where We're Going



Transit Building Blocks

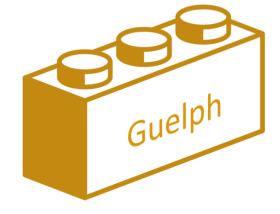




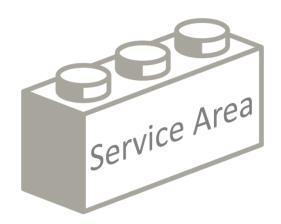












Primary urban centres

Elora, Fergus, Guelph, Arthur, Mount Forest, Erin, Hillsburgh, Rockwood, Aberfoyle, Harriston, Palmerston, Drayton, Moorefield, Morriston, Clifford

County-wide Travel anywhere in County

Highest demand trips served Lowest net cost Prioritizes employment and population growth management

All trips served Highest net cost Prioritizes access and equity and community safety





Daytime only

Similar to current service hours

Add evenings and weekends
Extended hours

Highest demand hours served Lowest net cost Prioritizes financial sustainability Wider range of hours served
Highest net cost
Prioritizes employment with evening and
weekend shifts (i.e. industrial & retail)
Prioritize community safety and growth
management





Longer wait time / frequency

Longer booking period and wait time

Shorter wait time / frequency Shorter booking period and wait time

Only works for pre-planned trips Lower cost Less reliable Prioritizes financial sustainability More reliable and faster
Highest cost
Prioritizes ridership, growth management and
economic development





Indirect Trips

Routes deviate to pick-up more passengers and reduce walking distance

Increased trip grouping in rural and low density areas
Reduces walking distance
Lower cost in rural areas
Prioritizes access and equity

Direct Ride

Routes follow direct path to key destinations with limited deviation

Increased trip grouping in urban areas only
Can increase walk distance or wait time
Lower cost in urban areas
Prioritizes growth management and environmental sustainability





Within County only

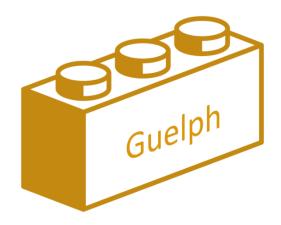
Can only travel within Wellington County

Service does not leave the County More service available within the County Prioritizes access and equity and financial sustainability Add external municipalities and GO connections

Can travel to Orangeville, Kitchener, etc.

Direct travel outside of County boundary to large urban centres or transit hubs
Less service available within County
Prioritizes employment and growth management





Outer access

Transfers offered at edge of Guelph Transit network

Downtown access

Direct travel to/from any location in Guelph

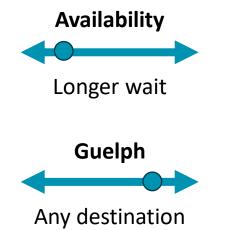
More availability for County trips Prioritizes environmental and financial sustainability Less availability for County trips Prioritizes convenience and access and equity



Transit Scenarios – Current model

RIDE WELL as it exists today







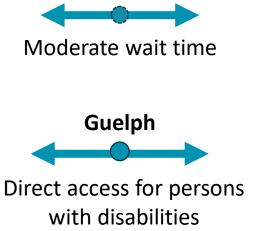
Transit Scenarios – Access and Equity

 Options that maximize ease of travel and opportunities for all residents in Wellington County





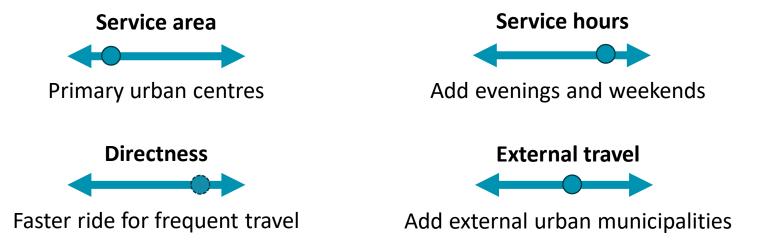


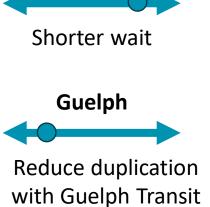


Availability

Transit Scenarios – Economic Development

Options that maximize job creation and access



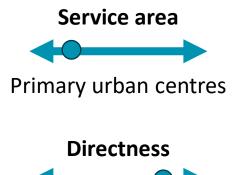


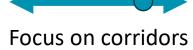
Availability



Transit Scenarios – Growth Management

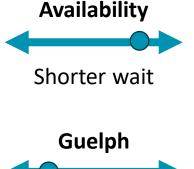
Options that encourage and support dense living in urban centres









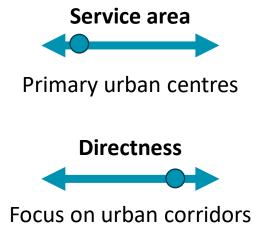


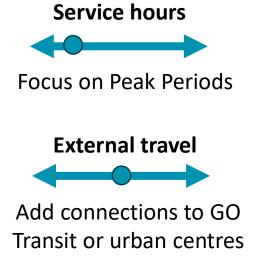


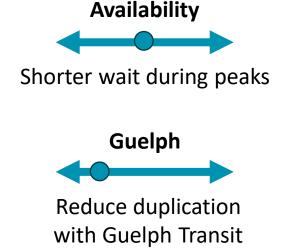


Transit Scenarios – Environmental Sustainability

Options that encourage and support minimizing environmental impact



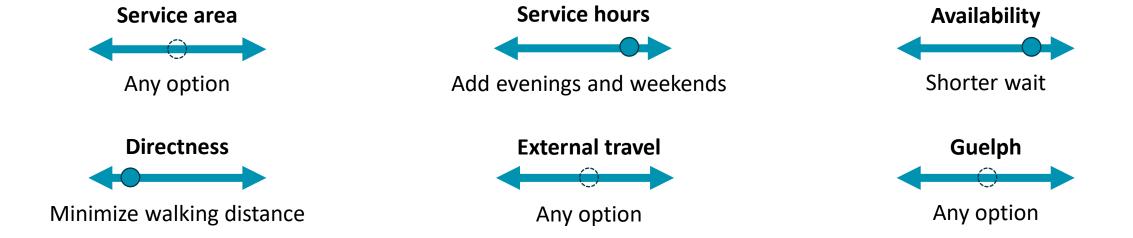






Transit Scenarios – Community Safety

Options that prioritize safer travel and feelings of safety



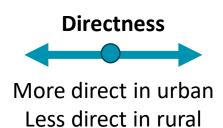


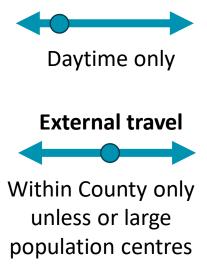
Transit Scenarios – Financial Sustainability

Options that minimize costs

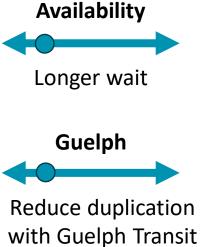


Primary urban centres





Service hours





Resource Decisions (independent of service type)



Vehicle size

- 30 to 40' standard bus: Larger accessible vehicle with more capacity
- Cutaways: Smaller accessible bus for low-demand travel
- Vans and Sedans: Smallest vehicles with low capacity and low operating cost (not always accessible)

Vehicle propulsion

- Diesel: Fossil-fuel, common, vehicles cheaper, easier to fuel
- **Electric:** Battery-electric, more expensive/limited purchase options, more funding options, requires charging infrastructure

Fares

- **Higher Fare:** Lower tax impact, but lower ridership and more expensive for frequent trips
- Lower Fare: Higher tax impact, but higher ridership and less expensive for frequent trips



Transit Scenarios – Discussion

Do the service design elements change your vision?

	Area	Hours	Availability	Directness	External travel	Guelph
Current model		40	←		40	←
Access and equity	←	←		40	←	
Economic development	40					40
Growth management	40					←
Environmental sustainability	40	40	←			40
Community safety				40		
Financial sustainability	40	←	40			96 CONSULTING

Discussion – Financial Implications

Options that can be used to finance portions of the service:

- Metrolinx is investigating expanding the GO service to Erin
- Partnership with local townships (Centre-Wellington planning to complete a transit study)
- Provincial Gas Tax funding is available
- Federal grants which support capital costs
- Other grants that support low-carbon initiatives
- Reduction in Community Transportation Grant will increase municipal operating investment

Which levers would you shift to the right recognizing it may add to cost?



Transit Scenarios – Discussion

Which levers would you shift to the right recognizing it may add to cost?

	Area	Hours	Availability	Directness	External travel	Guelph
Current model		←	←		40	
Access and equity		←		40	←	
Economic development	40	←				40
Growth management	40					40
Environmental sustainability	40	40				40
Community safety				40		
Financial sustainability	40	40	40			98 CONSULTING



Recap





Next Steps

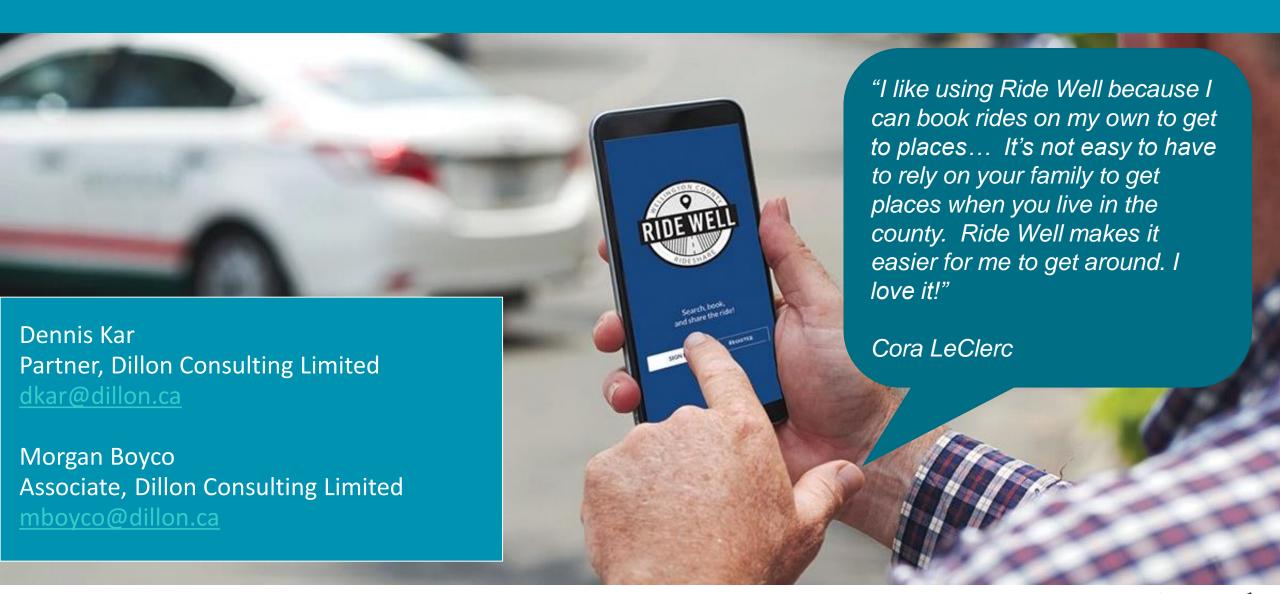


Next Steps

- Identify service models which align with the vision and the tradeoffs discussed today
- Report and presentation to Committee of Council June 18th, seeking approval on further development of a concept model for the next 6 months and options for the future
- A post-2025 service plan will be developed to define the expected ridership and costs and will be presented to Committee of Council in September



Questions?







Agenda

Purpose

Existing Service Conditions

Community Survey and Staff Workshop Results

Council Workshop

Recommendations



Background

Study Purpose

- Identify improvements that should be made to the service during the last six months of the pilot, taking into consideration an increased grant allocation
- Identify next steps for the County once the pilot program and grant funding ends in March 2025

Presentation Purpose

- Summarize engagement results, including community survey, staff and council workshops
- Confirm Ride Well service outcomes, including vision and mission based on feedback collected from the councilor workshop
- Identify high-level short-term modifications to the pilot to:
 - Improve service
 - Test innovative solutions that may be applicable beyond the pilot





Existing Service Conditions

Travel Patterns

- Nearly 50% of trips start and end in Fergus
- 34 to 42% of trips have an origin or destination within Guelph, Guelph/Eramosa and Centre Wellington
- Peak travel times occur between 6:00am and 5:00pm

Service Performance

- While availability has improved, 19% of requests between September and January were assigned trips more than 30 minutes after their requested time, due to high demand
- The on-time performance and average wait times have worsened and has resulted in an increase in both no show and abandoned trips



Most Popular Destinations for Unique Riders

- Guelph Central Station (GOST Stop), Guelph
- Walmart Supercentre, Fergus
- Groves Memorial Community Hospital, Fergus
- Fergus Sportsplex (GOST Stop), Fergus
- Gates of Fergus Retail Plaza, Fergus
- Zehrs, Fergus
- Elora GOST Transfer Point, Elora
- Stone Road Mall, Guelph
- Walmart Supercentre, Woodlawn Road, Guelph
- Subway, Elora
- Centre Wellington District High School, Fergus
- Wellington County Library, Fergus
- Smart Centres, Fergus





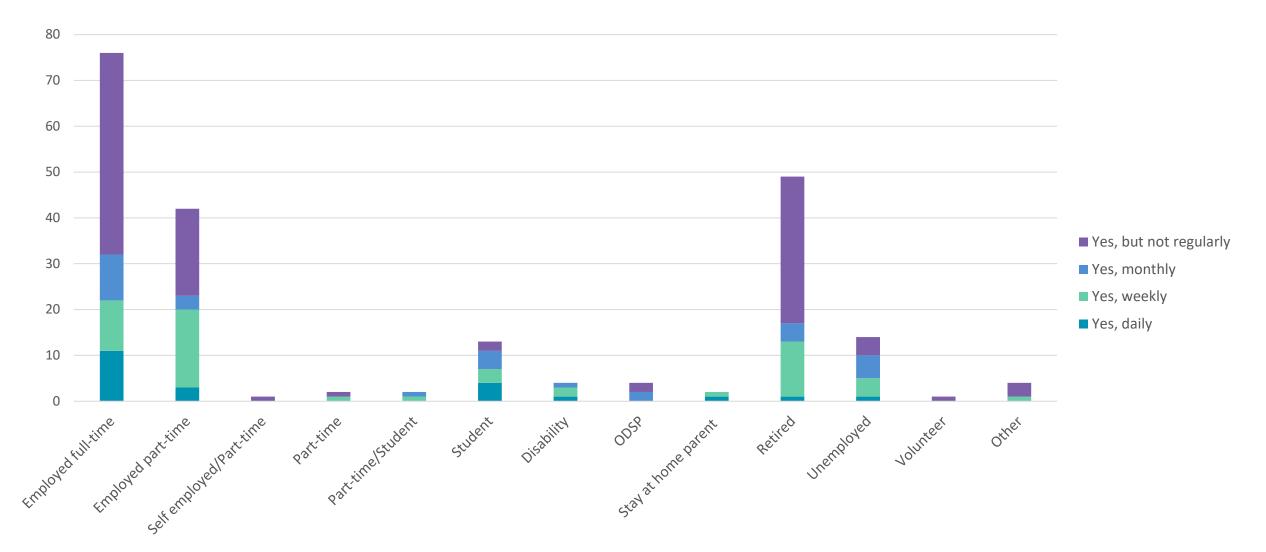


Existing Financial Conditions

Average Monthly Indicators	County of Wellington	Brant County	Perth County	Norfolk County	Grey County
Statistical Year	2023	2022	2022	2023	2023
Service Type	Door to Door On Demand	Door to Door On Demand	Fixed Route	Stop to Stop On Demand	Fixed Route
Service Area Population	103,010	39,474	81,565	32,500	100,905
Ridership	775	1,998	950	1,396	2,333
Ridership per Capita	0.007	0.051	0.012	0.043	0.023
Total Direct Operating Expense	\$33,500	\$62,500	\$44,000	\$44,904	\$84,691
Direct Operating Cost per Revenue Vehicle Hour	\$42.00	\$37.12	\$92.70	\$91.72	\$50.61
Direct Operating Cost per Capita	\$0.33	\$1.58	\$0.54	\$1.38	\$0.84



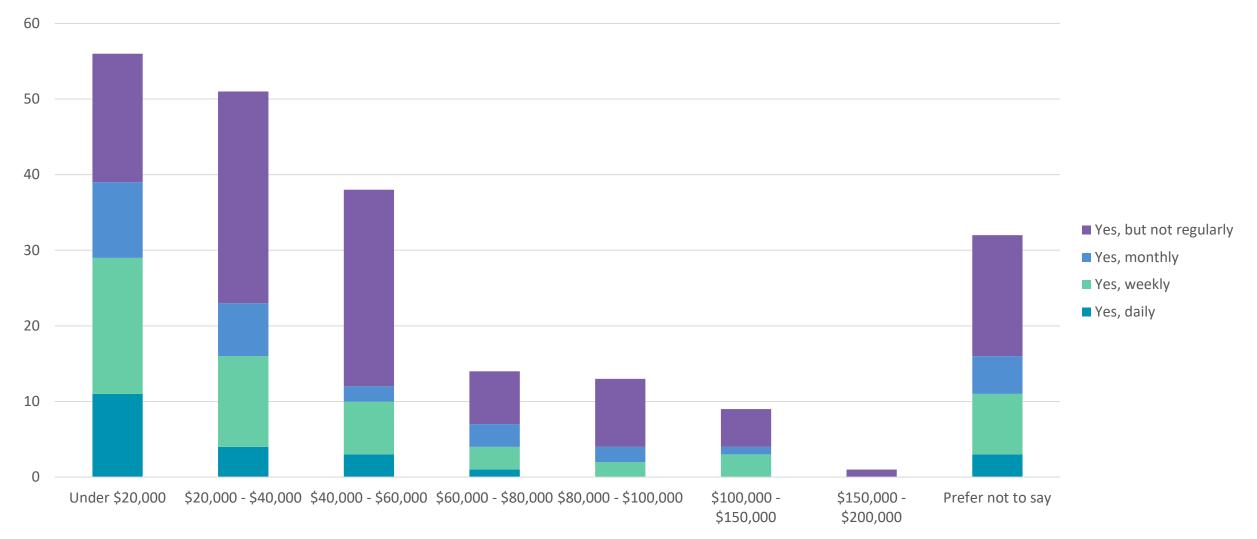
Community Survey Results – Employment Status







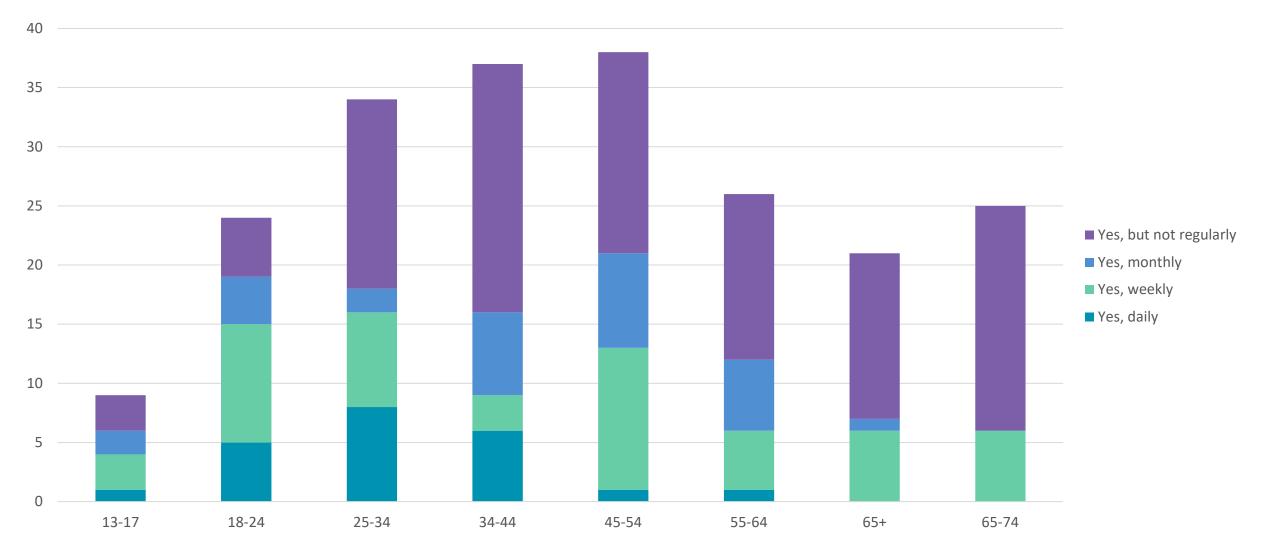
Community Survey Results – Income





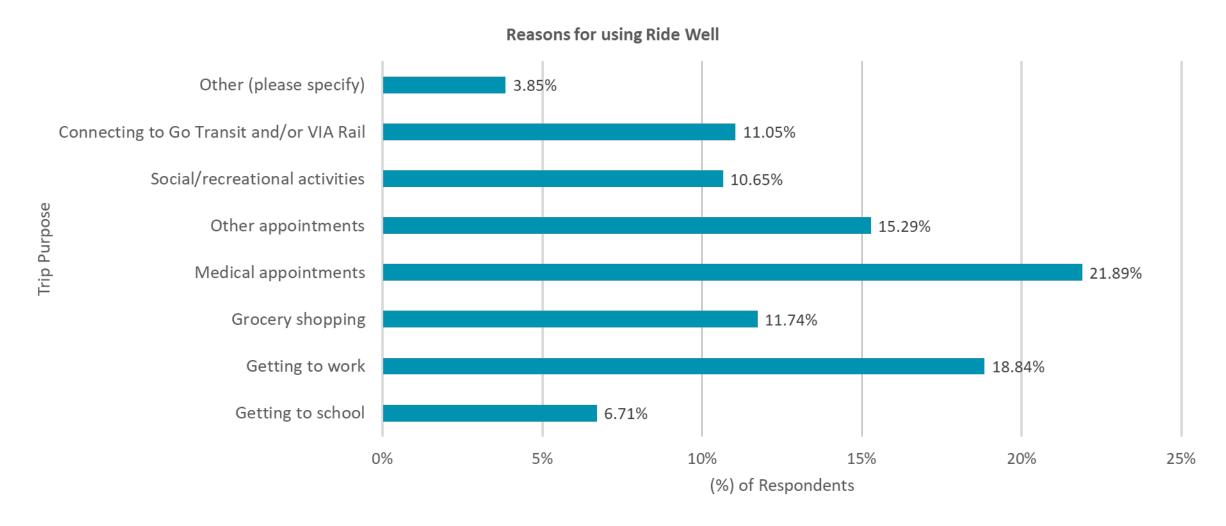


Community Survey Results – Age





Reasons for Using Ride Well





Community Survey Results

Feedback collected from community surveys can be grouped into the following four categories:

Service Flexibility (Operating Hours & Driver Availability)

- Low usage Less than 3% of respondents get around with Ride Well
- Less than 20% of respondents use Ride Well for commuting
- Difficulty in booking trips and long wait time due to low vehicle availability
- Should provide more service on weekends and later in the evening

Geographic Service Coverage

- Service not available in some rural communities
- Unclear service area demarcation
- Should connect to more external cities or areas (Orangeville, Waterloo)

Accessibility (Affordability and Ease of Use)

- 39% of respondents thought Ride Well is an affordable option
- Difficulty navigating the app
- Need for a credit card to request a trip is a barrier to some residents

Awareness and Information

- 42% of respondents had never heard of Ride Well
- People were unclear where the service was available, how to use it, and its service targets
- Over 30% of respondents suggested more promotion on social media



Policy Review

A review of the existing Ride Well policies identified the following six Strategic Directions:

Access and Equity

Economic Development

Growth Management

Environmental Sustainability

Community
Safety

Financial Sustainability





Staff Consultation Results – Alignment with Strategic Directions

Access and Equity

- Access to affordable food options, and resource centres.
- Can reduce the number of cars per household
- Equity is choosing travel that works for you; transit is one part of the solution.
- Shared rides builds community.

Economic Development

- Connectivity supports circular economy.
- Expanded service could support cross boundary employee recruitment.

Growth Management

- Population density and growth exists in urban centres.
- Transit can reduce road expansion.
- Road widening can encroach on agricultural and developable land.

Environmental Sustainability

- Rural infrastructure can make micromobility choices unappealing.
- Green development standards will include transitoriented design and prioritize permanency.

Community Safety

- Fewer cars
 means safer
 roads; however,
 many Ride Well
 trips are
 currently not
 shared trips.
- Transit provides

 a safe choice
 allowing
 residents to
 continue to
 connect to
 supports when
 they may
 otherwise stay
 home.

Financial Sustainability

Staff
 acknowledge
 the importance
 of an
 economically
 viable solution



Council Workshop Discussion

Access and Equity

- Benefits of Ride Well include the reduction of social isolation, access to events across the county, equity, and mobility freedom.
- Provides social and employment opportunities as well as access to healthcare and social services.
- Ridership has continued to increase suggesting it is a needed service.

Accessibility

- Very few accessible taxis to operate a parallel service.
- Fares are high for remote users.
- Need to better accommodate marginalized individuals.

Service Vulnerabilities

- Regularity of service requested to improve reliability.
- High demand stretches resources thin.
- Unaccommodated trips due to limited vehicle availability.

Financial Sustainability

- Necessary to balance cost and level of service.
- Council expressed openness to financial investment but with no quantified value.
- Small budget changes make a big impact considering the small Ride Well budget.



Vision & Mission

Based on the key themes derived from the discussion, it was identified that the Ride Well service should prioritize the strategic directions of Access & Equity and Financial Sustainability.

Using these priorities the following were developed to guide the future of the Ride Well service:

Vision:

To be a sustainable mobility choice for all residents of the County.

Mission:

To provide financially responsible public transportation throughout the County to permit mobility for residents of all demographics, abilities, and incomes.



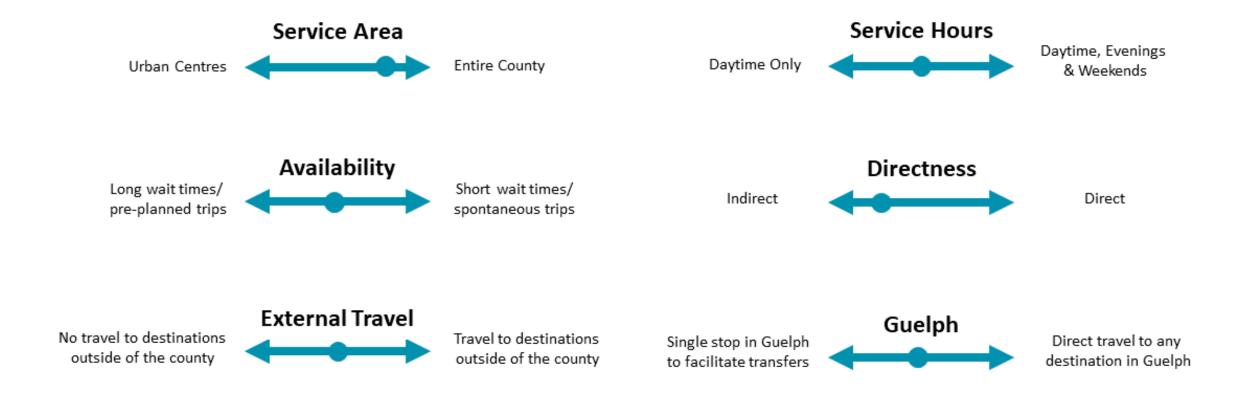
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Service Characteristics



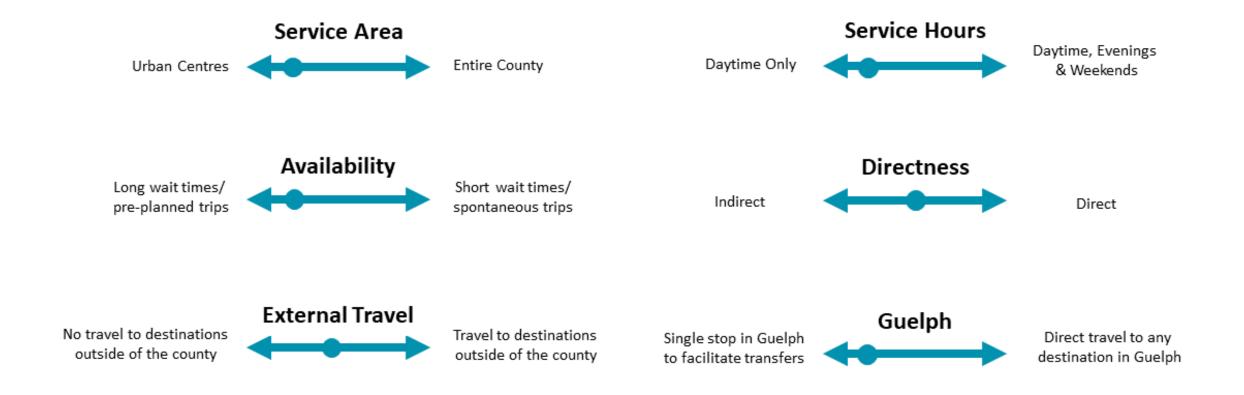


Access & Equity





Financial Sustainability

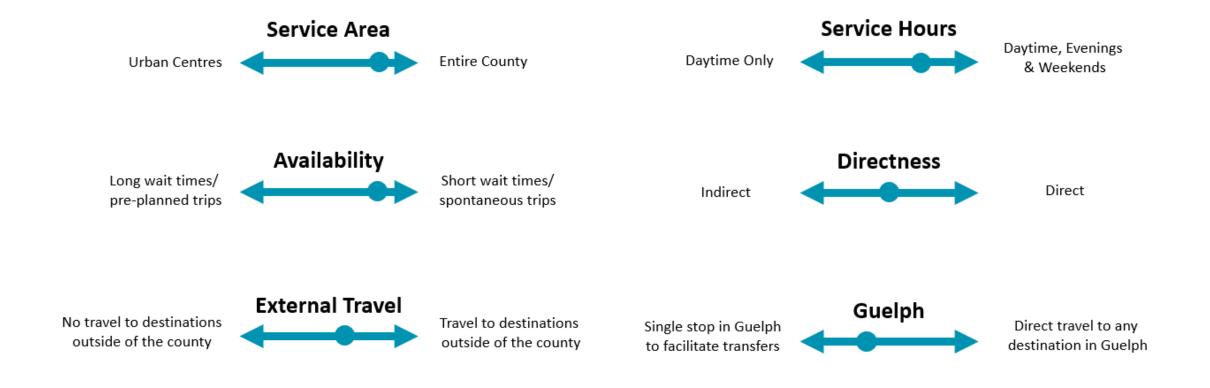






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Recommended Model

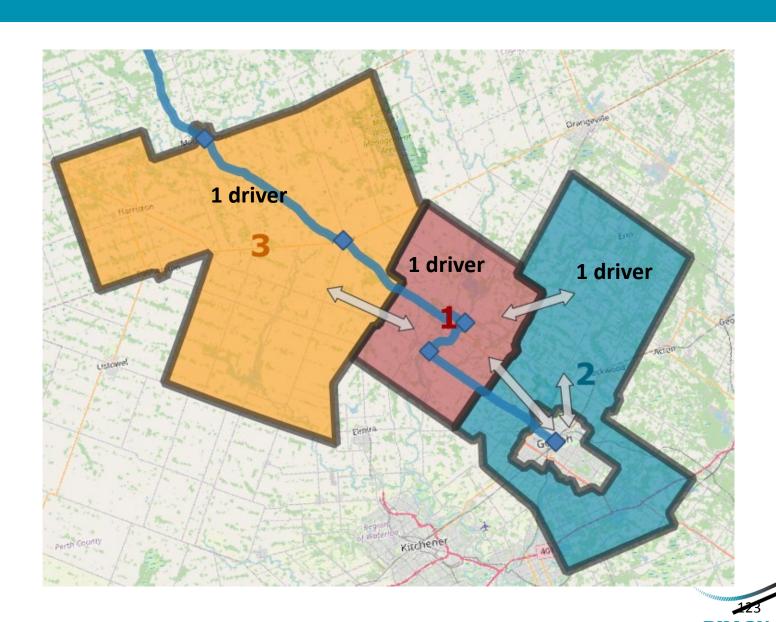






Short-term Recommendations – Base Funding

- 1. Shift to a zone based on demand operational structure (improve efficiency and access and equity).
 - Passengers can travel within each zone without needing to transfer.
 - Passengers can travel between Zones 3 and 1 or Zones 2 and 1 without transferring.
 - Passengers travelling between Zones 1 and 3 would be required to transfer within Centre Wellington





Short-term Recommendations – Base Funding

2. Provide consistent departure times for trips between Guelph and Elora/Fergus where passengers can be grouped on existing Ride Well vehicles.

Example Schedule Based on One Additional Vehicle

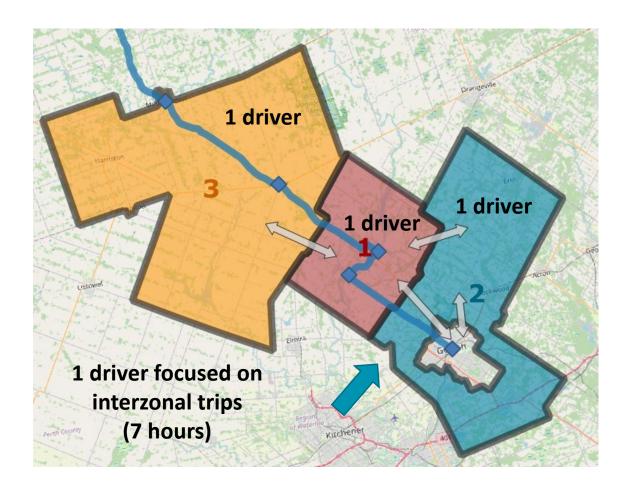
Transit	Fergus Southbound	Guelph Northbound	
GOST	9:12am	10:40am	
Ride Well	10:30am	11:15am	
Ride Well	12:00pm	12:45pm	
Ride Well	1:30pm	2:15pm	
Ride Well	3:00pm	3:45pm	
GOST	4:12pm	5:32pm	



F

Short-term Recommendations – Base Funding

- 3. Add additional seven service hours per day, consistent with the approved budget to allow a single vehicle to focus on interzonal trips midday
- 4. Introduce a 10-minute extension to passenger arrival times for trips between on demand zones to provide the flexibility to increase vehicle efficiency and improve availability



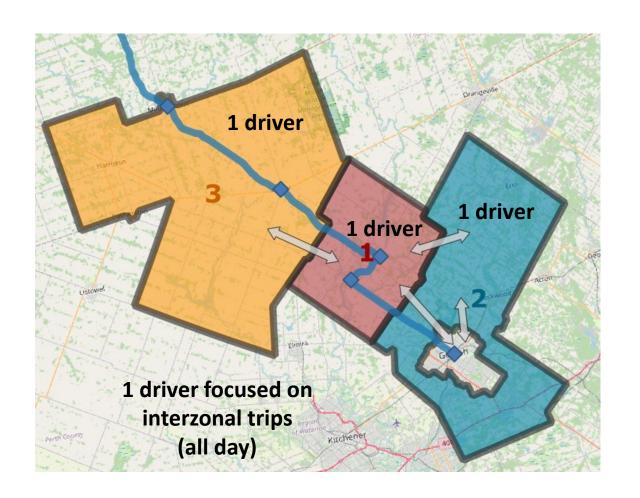


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Short-term Recommendations — Additional Funding

3. Add an additional 7 service hours per day beyond those included in the budget, dedicating 1 vehicle to each zone and 1 driver to interzonal trips across the entire service day

A dedicated interzonal service could be converted long term into a fixed route service along the corridor without impacting availability within the zones.







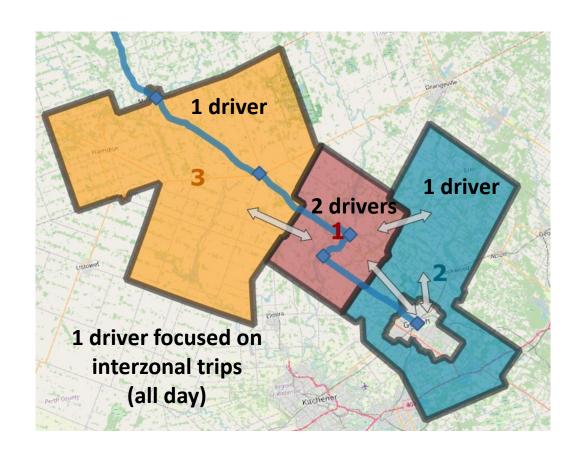
Short-term Recommendations – Additional Funding

4. Should there continue to be a high number of trip denials, additional service hours could be added in Zone 1 (Centre Wellington), where 47% of trips currently take place.

This would add capacity to this zone and could help address unaccommodated trips in the busiest zones while ensuring access and equity across the entire County.

The addition of one vehicle in Zone 1 during mid-day (approximately seven and a half hours) is expected to cost approximately \$6,000 per month.

Staff will monitor the service over the summer/fall and if deemed necessary, Committee will have the opportunity to reallocate vehicle hours for the remainder of the pilot.





Short-term Recommendations – Additional Funding

Recommendation	Cost		
Marketing and Communications	\$5,000 - \$10,000		
Additional seven vehicle hours to dedicate a vehicle to interzonal trips all day	\$52,000		
Additional midday vehicle in Centre-Wellington (7.5 hours)	\$6,000 per month		
Total	\$112,900 – 117,900		





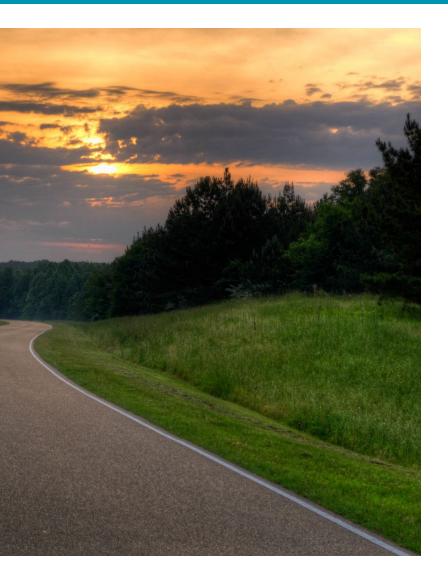
Long-term Recommendations



- 1. Develop a plan for fixed route service along the Highway 6 corridor, complementing and/or replacing portions of the GOST service to provide more frequent and reliable service and increase opportunities for ride-sharing
- 2. Explore options for the procurement and operation of an accessible transit vehicle (\$90,000 \$275,000, depending on the vehicle type)
- 3. Explore the cost-benefit of having a designated service within Centre Wellington with the Township. A partnership could support a long-term financially sustainable solution



Long-term Recommendations



- 4. Increase service hours to provide connectivity to GO Rail at departure and arrival times, improving connectivity and access to the County from the Greater Golden Horseshoe
- 5. Review existing and planned GO Transit services and recommend connections to neighbouring urban centres.
- 6. Identify opportunities to reduce Ride Well travel within Guelph while maintaining access to key destination
- 7. For ambulatory passengers, connections to Guelph Transit or GO Transit may facilitate these connections
- 8. Explore modifications to fare structure to reflect rising costs







COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

Committee Report

To: Chair and Members of the Economic Development Committee

From: Christina Mann, Manager of Economic Development

Date: Tuesday, June 18, 2024

Subject: RIDE WELL Short-Term Recommendations

Background:

On May 16, 2024, a workshop was hosted by Dillon Consulting for County Council with the purpose of identifying the vision, values, and future direction of the Ride Well service. By the end of the workshop, County Council had identified two strategic priorities of the Ride Well service: access and equity and financial sustainability. Dillon Consulting has listed the below short-term recommendations to be implemented to complete the pilot phase of Ride Well, which concludes in March 2025.

In addition, the County has been awarded \$227,196 by the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) to complete the pilot phase of the service. Dillon has also provided recommendations on using a portion of the additional funding.

Short-Term (pre-2025) – Base Funding Recommendations:

- 1. **Zonal Structure:** change the service structure to include the three zones identified in the Ride Well 2024-2025 Service Plan Strategic Direction Report and outlined in the 2025 Service Plan Interim Report dated March 19, 2024. These changes will not increase the cost of service as they reflect a reallocation of service hours. They will also help improve access and equity by increasing the availability of service to the north.
- 2. **Group Bookings to the City of Guelph:** provide consistent departure times for trips between Guelph and Elora/Fergus where passengers can be grouped on existing Ride Well vehicles. This can be done via the on-demand Ride Well service by setting specific departure or arrival windows (e.g., 7:00 am, 8:30 am, 10:00 am) that would help test the potential of implementing a future fixed route service. This would occur outside of the two southbound departure times and two northbound arrival times that the GOST bus currently operates. This recommendation will improve financial sustainability by allowing more long-distance trips to be grouped together and will further test the concept of a fixed-route corridor. By doing this, it will also improve access and equity as it will dedicate more service for internal travel within Wellington County.
- Extend Arrival Times to Support Zonal Structure: introduce a 10-minute extension to
 passenger arrival times for trips between on demand zones to provide the flexibility to
 increase vehicle efficiency and improve availability. This recommendation will improve

- financial sustainability by allowing more trips to be grouped together, thus increasing service availability.
- 4. Add 7 vehicle service hours starting in July: add an additional seven service hours to each day, consistent with the approved budget, to increase the availability for all trips between on demand zones, including those into Guelph, and introduce fixed travel windows for departure to Guelph. Currently, to cover the large County, RideCo schedules drivers such that there are three vehicles operating during the busiest hours, and four vehicles operating for one hour at noon. The additional vehicle hours should be focused on providing trips midday to support trips between on demand zones when GOST is not operating, in particular between 12:00 pm and 3:30 pm when ridership demand is high. This will help increase the availability of service, further promoting ridership growth and the goal of access and equity.

Short-Term (pre-2025) – Additional Funding Recommendations:

- 1. **Further Increase Vehicle Hours:** add an additional seven service hours per day beyond those included in the budget; this would provide enough service hours to have a vehicle dedicated to each zone across the entire service day improving the availability of service in all zones. This increase in service hours is expected to cost approximately \$52,000 for the remainder of the pilot.
- 2. Monitor and Reallocate Vehicle Hours: should there continue to be a high number of trip denials, additional service hours could be added in Zone 1 (Centre Wellington) where 47% of trips currently take place. This would add capacity to this zone and could help address unaccommodated trips in the busiest zones while ensuring access and equity across the entire County. The addition of one vehicle in Zone 1 during mid-day (approximately seven and a half hours) is expected to cost approximately \$6,000 per month. Staff will monitor the service over the summer/fall and if deemed necessary, Committee will have the opportunity to reallocate vehicle hours for the remainder of the pilot.
- 3. **Bolster Marketing:** add funding to conduct additional marketing to promote the increase in service availability. This should only be implemented if additional vehicles are added beyond the seven budgeted hours. Marketing costs are expected to be between \$5,000 and \$10,000.

Strategic Action Plan

This report relates to the following objectives and priorities in the County's Strategic Action Plan:

- Best services in place to service the County's residents and businesses.
- Best infrastructure in place to meet the current and future needs of the community.

Recommendation:

That the Economic Development Committee approve the short-term recommendations to be implemented starting in July 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Christina Mann

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Manager of Economic Development



COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

Committee Report

To: Chair and Members of the Economic Development Committee

From: Ken DeHart, County Treasurer

Date: Tuesday, June 18, 2024

Subject: Economic Development Financial Statements and Variance Projections as of May 31, 2024

Background:

This report is respectfully submitted in accordance with the County's Budget Management Policy, and provides a first projection to year-end based on expenditures and revenues to May 31, 2024 for Economic Development.

Operating

- Grants and subsidies currently includes the 1st quarter payment for Ride Well in 2024. The Rural Economic Development (RED) Grant programme of \$25,000 will be received later in the year once expenditures for this programme are completed and reporting is submitted. No variance to this line item is anticipated.
- User fees and charges received to date consists of Ride Well passenger revenue (\$26,100) which includes payments up until April. Demand for the service has been steady month-to-month thus far and the expectation is that revenues would come in close to budget. Tourism signage revenue is tracking to budget and a no significant variance is expected.
- Salaries and wages are under budget as a result of staffing vacancies and gapping earlier in the year. Overall savings between \$60,000 and \$70,000 is anticipated by year-end.
- Supplies, materials and equipment expenditures are under budget as additional expenditures are expected through the summer and fall with no variance anticipated.
- Purchased services includes work on a number of projects that are underway or to be undertaken, including, Community Improvement Plan, Ride Well Long-Term Planning, Talent Attraction, economic data collection and analysis, Downtown Development, Taste Real and Tourism Development activities. At this time consultant work for Smart Cities is well underspent. Work is ongoing on a number of Smart Cities projects and expenditures will be incurred later in the year with no variance anticipated. Various savings are likely to result in planned projects and events in a range of \$20,000 to \$30,000.

Ride Well

As previously reported to committee, the County has been awarded an additional \$227,200 in funding towards the Ride Well Programme by the Ontario Ministry of Transportation to be used by the current programme end date of March 2025. The potential uses of these fund are outlined in a separate report provided to committee this month. At this time the net financial impact of this additional funding is to be determined, pending decisions made on any additional expenditures towards the programme during this period. Any funding not used towards additional expenditures can be used to decrease the net impact to the budget for 2024/25.

Currently contract costs for the Ride Well service are on budget with invoicing payments made through the month of April. Revenues for the service have remained consistent through the first months of the year and the overall it is expected that the programme will come in on budget at the end of the year. Staff will continue to monitor the service throughout the remainder of the year and work with the consultant in order to present committee with additional information towards the future of the service in the fall.

Transfer payments:

- Payments made to date include funding for Business Support Agencies including payments to the Business Centre Guelph Wellington, Saugeen Economic Development Corporation, Guelph General Hospital for physician recruitment and the Western's Warden's Caucus. The payment towards the WOWC is now recorded fully under Economic Development as the membership component is no longer split out, the variance to this line will be offset by savings in the Council budget. BR+E funding for \$25,000 has been approved for Erin as well as recently approved for payment to Wellington North. Additional Business Support Agency grants as well as BR+E funding will be processed over the remainder of the year with no variance anticipated.
- The Community Improvement Plan Implementation Fund does not yet have any payments made in 2024 as projects must be completed for payment. So far, the County has approved three CIP requests that would provide \$20,500 and local municipal staff have indicated there are more applications coming. There have been significant savings in this area in prior years. To mitigate historical variances, the 2024 budget includes a transfer from reserve to offset any CIP grants provided beyond \$80,000. Staff continue to work towards continued engagement with municipalities to provide grant funding to as many projects as possible. Currently staff expect between \$100,000 and \$120,000 in savings in 2024 which will be largely offset by not utilizing the reserve transfer.

Overall, Economic Development is close to budget on a variety of initiatives that are undertaken on a yearly basis and under budget on staffing. The Ride Well programme and funding enhancement represents significant revenue and expenditure amounts within the Economic Development budget, which will continue throughout the remainder of the year. Excluding Ride Well, where decisions are pending, staff currently expect that there will be savings between \$100,000 and \$130,000 at year-end.

Strategic Action Plan:

This report relates to the following objectives and priorities in the County's Strategic Action Plan:

Making the Best Decisions for the Betterment of the Community.

Recommendation:

That the Financial Statements and Variance Projections as of May 31, 2024 for Economic Development be approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Ken DeHart, CPA, CGA County Treasurer



County of Wellington

Economic Development

Statement of Operations as of 31 May 2024

	Annual Budget	May Actual \$	YTD Actual \$	YTD Actual %	Remaining Budget
Revenue					
Grants and Subsidies	\$150,400	\$24,452	\$36,631	24%	\$113,769
User Fees and Charges	\$112,000	\$9,240	\$32,438	29%	\$79,562
Other Revenue	\$0	\$0	\$345	0%	\$(345)
Internal Recoveries	\$0	\$2,000	\$2,000	0%	\$(2,000)
Total Revenue	\$262,400	\$35,691	\$71,415	27%	\$190,985
Expenditures					
Salaries, Wages and Benefits	\$1,074,500	\$92,219	\$408,486	38%	\$666,014
Supplies, Material, Equipment	\$32,300	\$2,014	\$6,306	20%	\$25,994
Purchased Services	\$804,100	\$95,956	\$269,593	34%	\$534,507
Transfer Payments	\$485,500	\$72,035	\$122,035	25%	\$363,465
Insurance and Financial	\$20,500	\$1,752	\$7,374	36%	\$13,126
Internal Charges	\$8,000	\$242	\$264	3%	\$7,736
Total Expenditures	\$2,424,900	\$264,218	\$814,059	34%	\$1,610,841
NET OPERATING COST / (REVENUE)	\$2,162,500	\$228,527	\$742,644	34%	\$1,419,856
Debt and Transfers					
Transfers from Reserves	\$(680,000)	\$0	\$(600,000)	88%	\$(80,000)
Transfer to Reserves	\$0	\$0	\$345	0%	\$(345)
Total Debt and Transfers	\$(680,000)	\$0	\$(599,655)	88%	\$(80,345)
NET COST (REVENUE)	\$1,482,500	\$228,527	\$142,989	10%	\$1,339,511



COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

Committee Report

To: Chair and Members of the Economic Development Committee

From: Christina Mann, Manager of Economic Development

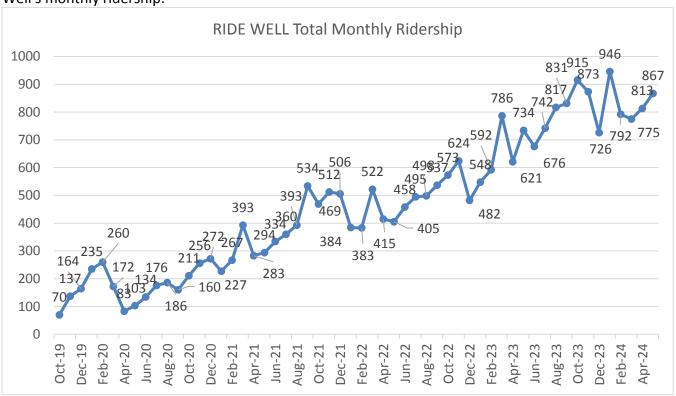
Date: Tuesday, June 18, 2024

Subject: Economic Development Report – June 2024

Background:

Ride Well

In May, 867 rides were completed, an increase from 813 rides in April. The following chart shows Ride Well's monthly ridership:



RideCo adjusted its settings last month to increase the service capacity while maintaining quality. The following table shows key performance indicators (KPIs) over the last quarter:

Month	Rides/ Bookings	Passengers/ Seats	Unique users	New users	Average rides per user	Average rides per day	New accounts registered
March 2024	775	806	137	15	5.7	38.6	54
April 2024	813	831	148	13	5.5	37.0	69
May 2024	867	908	166	22	5.2	39.4	78

The growth last month was attributed to more customers using the service, and software adjustments made by RideCo which led to increased vehicle availability.

In addition to the above table, staff received ridership data from local organizations that book rides on behalf of clients, augmenting the Unique User data in the KPI table. On average, these organizations manage rides for the following number of clients on a regular basis:

- The Grove Youth Hubs: average between 29-35 Youth riders per month
- Community Resource Centre (CRC): average of six unique clients per month
- Canadian Mental Health Association of Waterloo-Wellington (CMHAWW): three individual clients using the service approximately once a month.

Uber Integration

Uber is now available to book on the Ride Well app. On June 7, the Uber integration was introduced as a soft launch, and seven Uber rides were booked that day. To facilitate a smooth implementation, Uber is currently only bookable in areas of the County where there is a supply of drivers. Uber has been actively reaching out to a large pool of drivers and offering incentives to operate in areas of the County that are not well-serviced by Uber.

Interactive Voice Response (IVR)

IVR will be available for Ride Well this month. RideCo is completing final testing of the IVR functionality with the Uber integration to ensure there are no issues between the two features. Once testing is completed, IVR will be available for customers to use, allowing them to opt-in and receive ride information via phone call instead of the current automated SMS messages.

Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E)

Staff will be presenting findings of the Downtown Rockwood BR+E project at the Guelph/Eramosa Business Breakfast on June 14. Key findings include a lack of knowledge of business support programmes and resources, a desire to work on downtown revitalization and beautification, and better communication with the Township.

2024 **Municipal BR+E Fund** applications have been received from four member municipalities so far (Centre Wellington, Erin, Minto, and Wellington North). Staff are following up with the remaining municipalities to ensure funding is distributed for the year. The Centre Wellington Shuttle Bus, funded in part through the County's Municipal BR+E Fund, started operations on May 18 and is available every weekend in the summer until September 8.





Community Improvement Funding

Staff received and approved two new Minor Activity Grants through the Town of Minto in May:

- McDonald Chiropractic was approved for up to \$7,500 or 50% of project costs to renovate and convert a basement unit into a new bachelor apartment in downtown Harriston. This supports the County's strategic priority to improve housing options and stock, especially in downtown areas.
- Reroot Farm was approved for up to \$12,500 or 50% of project costs to renovate the upper floor
 of their farm shop into a certified kitchen. This will enable them to host events with local chefs
 to promote local food and provide workshops on topics such as food preservation. This business
 improvement aligns with the County's goal to support on-farm diversified agricultural uses and
 bolster agri-tourism in Wellington County.

Tourism and Taste Real

Farmers' Markets

The Farmers' Market Trail is back for its fourth season, featuring an updated 'passport' now available. Market visitors can collect a stamp each time they visit a different market for a chance to win one of seven local food prize packs. The Trail is an excellent way to encourage locals and visitors to explore Wellington's vibrant communities. Passports are available at each farmers' market, libraries, tourism outlets, and can also be requested via the Economic Development website.

The Taste Real **Farmers' Market Box** programme has seen strong uptake so far. The first box, featuring the Aberfoyle Farmers' Market, saw 57 orders, and orders continue to come in steadily. In addition to the two free pick-up locations (Guelph Farmers' Market and the Wellington County Museum and Archives) and home delivery across Wellington County and Guelph, boxes can now be ordered for pick-up at the following County libraries for a \$5.00 delivery fee: Mount Forest, Palmerston, Erin, Rockwood, and Puslinch. This expansion allows out-of-County residents to participate and purchase boxes.



Spring Rural Romp

On May 25, 13 farm and food locations opened their doors to visitors as part of the annual Taste Real **Spring Rural Romp**, a self-guided farm and food tour in Northern Wellington County. Despite the rainy weather, most locations saw a good turnout and found the event a valuable way to promote their business. Feedback from participating host locations was excellent, with all survey respondents indicating they would like to host again in the future. The event attracted visitors of all ages, from young families to retirees, including attendees from London and Grey Bruce, with most visitors being local from Guelph, Kitchener-Waterloo, and surrounding areas.

The Taste Real **Fall Rural Romp** is scheduled for Saturday, September 28, and will take place in Southern Wellington County (Centre Wellington, Erin, Guelph/Eramosa, Puslinch) and Guelph.



Food Experience Guide

The revised Food Experience Guide will be released at the end of June. The guide is a companion piece to the Taste Real Local Food Map and includes must-visit destinations in each municipality, top agri-tourism experiences, farm-to-table dining options, beverage businesses, and seasonal outings.

Seasonal Campaigns

Taste Real participated in **Ontario's Local Food Week** from June 3 to 9 with a series of daily social media posts highlighting ways to experience and purchase local food in Wellington County and Guelph. Taste Real also promoted special menus, food boxes, experiences, and outings for **Father's Day**.

Staff continue to promote seasonal experiences, festivals, and events via the Experience Wellington newsletter, social media campaigns, and the **Top 5 Things To Do In Wellington County This Week** series highlighting the events calendar.



Craft Gin Trail

The second annual Craft Gin Festival returned to the Elora

Centre for the Arts on Saturday, June 8. The event featured nine local craft distilleries and local food, allowing patrons to sample beverages and participate in games and activities. The event saw an excellent turnout of 233 patrons from Wellington County, Guelph, Kitchener-Waterloo, the GTA, and as far away as Woodstock and Barrie. The event further promotes the Craft Gin Trail as a tourism experience and Wellington County as a culinary destination.



Downtown Promotion

The new downtown marketing campaign, "Dating Our Downtowns," will launch on June 27. This social media campaign is part of the County's Rural Economic Development Fund (RED) project for Downtown Revitalization. It promotes the unique character, businesses, destinations, and features of Wellington's downtowns. Utilizing photo assets created during last year's downtown photo shoot, this innovative marketing approach aims to attract younger visitors seeking fun, quirky, and Instagrammable rural destinations.

Staff continue to collaborate with member municipalities to support their specific downtown revitalization projects that are part of the County's RED Grant deliverables. Projects supported so far include: Your Town Rising community assessment for Puslinch, downtown business promotion for Wellington North, downtown event marketing in Minto, and a downtown lighting design plan for Centre Wellington.

Workforce Videos

Staff are working with the Waterloo-Wellington-Dufferin Workforce Planning Board and the Career Education Council to execute video shoots for the "Day in the Life" video project. The video series showcasing careers in in-demand occupations will augment the existing video library on the Workforce Planning Board website and will be linked to the County website once completed. A Personal Support Worker video has been recorded at the Wellington Terrace, and two videos showcasing careers in automation in manufacturing will be recorded at Musashi later this month. Additional occupation highlight videos are being explored for summer shoots.

Talent Attraction

Multicultural Festival Planning

Staff are finalizing the layout and day-of event schedule for the 2nd Annual Multicultural Festival on July 13. Promotion has started across the County's social media channels, leveraging excellent photos and the New Horizon's video from last year's event. Staff are creating event signage to ensure smooth navigation for attendees and have developed an emergency plan to ensure the safety and security of all participants, emphasizing the festival's commitment to a safe and well-organized event.

Welcoming Week and Fall Rural Romp Bus Tours

Initial discussions have begun with external partners to plan two bus tours. One of these tours, scheduled during Welcoming Week commencing September 13, aims to introduce newcomers to popular destinations within the County, including partner municipalities, at no cost. The purpose of this bus tour is to help newcomers familiarize themselves with key areas, promote cultural and historical awareness, support local businesses, and foster a sense of belonging and community integration.



The second bus tour will involve students from the Ontario Agriculture and Veterinary College at the University of Guelph. Staff are currently exploring this collaboration to take place during the Fall Rural Romp. The purpose of this tour is to provide students with experiential learning, showcase the County's agricultural practices, and strengthen connections between the academic community and local agricultural enterprises.

Other

- Staff attended the THRIVE Summit in Blyth on May 14 and 15.
- Economic Development staff met with County Human Resources to discuss Economic
 Development initiatives aimed at assisting local employers with diversity and inclusion efforts
 on May 22.
- Staff met with the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot Coordinator from Sault Ste. Marie on May 23 to gain insights into the pilot programme's administration, benefits, and current impact and assess the feasibility of implementing a similar initiative within the County.
- Staff contributed content as part of the Tri-County Green Development Standards Municipal Visioning Workshop on May 24.
- Staff participated in the Township of Centre Wellington Community Connect meeting on May 28.
- Staff attended the Fergus Lions Home and Leisure Show on May 28-30 at the Centre Wellington Sportsplex. The booth prominently promoted the Ride Well programme and over 850 brochures were handed out, including 260 Ride Well post cards and 150 GOST brochures.
- Staff attended the Teeny Tiny Summit on May 28 in Holstein.
- Staff participated in the 2024 Welcoming Week planning session organized by the Guelph-Wellington Local Immigration Partnership on May 29. The objective of the meeting was to collaborate and organize activities for the upcoming Welcoming Week events scheduled throughout Guelph and Wellington.
- Staff discussed workforce trends in the Tourism and Hospitality sector as part of the Ontario Tourism Skills Network meeting on June 5.
- Staff facilitated activities and ran an information booth at the Ground Water Festival from June 5-9.
- Staff are coordinating a County Department Showcase at the Rockwood Party in the Park event on August 1.
- Staff continue to work on the new County's website in collaboration with the Information Management, and the Communications teams, including a new business directory.
- Staff are contributing data and content for the County's 2024 Annual Report.
- The Wellington Economic Development Group Meeting was held on June 4. Minutes attached herein.

Enquiries

The division received 83 enquiries from May 9 to June 10 including: Ride Well (28), Farmers' Markets/Boxes (19), Brochures/Material Request (8), Rural Romp (6), General (4), Business Directory (3), Business/Event Support (3), Funding/Grant Support (2), Events (1), Multicultural Festival (1), Newcomer Support (1), Advertising (1), Agriculture (1), BR+E (1), Signage (1), Smart Cities (1), Taste Real Partnership (1), and Website (1).

Newsletters

Taste Real e-newsletter was sent May 24. Experience Wellington e-newsletter was sent May 30.

Attachments:

Wellington County Economic Development Group Meeting Minutes – June 2024.

Strategic Action Plan:

This report relates to the following objectives and priorities in the County's Strategic Action Plan:

- Making the Best Decisions for the Betterment of the Community.
- Best services in place for the County's residents and businesses.

Recommendation:

That the Economic Development Committee approve the June Economic Development Report Respectfully submitted,

Christina Mann

Manager of Economic Development















Wellington County Economic Development Group **Minutes**

Tuesday, June 4th, 2024 9:30am **WWCF Office** Ec Dev Representatives/Supporting Organizations

Present:

Christina Mann (County of Wellington), James Vaclavek (County of Wellington), Justine Dainard (County of Wellington), Janet Harrop (Wellington Federation of Agriculture), Jane Shaw (WWCF), Marina Mato (Town of Erin), Dominique Charbonneau (County of Wellington), Charlene Hofbauer (Waterloo Wellington Dufferin Workforce Planning Board)

Regrets:

Jana Burns (County of Wellington), Joao Carrolo (Township of Centre Wellington), Jordan Grigg (County of Wellington), Stephen Barath (FedDev Ontario), Rose Austin (Saugeen Business Development Corporation), Anuraj Gill (OMAFRA), Andrea Ravensdale (County of Wellington), Belinda Wick-Graham (Town of Minto), Shawna Hamilton (Boundless Accelerator), Amy Grose (Township of Mapleton), Courtenay Hoytfox (Township of Puslinch), Kristel Manes (Business Centre Guelph/Wellington), George Borovilos (Township of Centre Wellington), Heather Vasey (County of Wellington), Robyn Mulder (Township of Wellington North), Leen Al-Habash (LIP), Anuradha Dam (County of Wellington), Ian Roger (Guelph/Eramosa Township), Kayla Wray (County Communications), Ryan Tompkins (MEJCAT)

- 1. Approval of Agenda Moved by Justine Dainard, seconded by James Vaclavek **CARRIED**
- 2. No declaration of pecuniary interests
- 3. Approval of May Minutes Moved by Dominique Charbonneau, seconded by Janet Harrop CARRIED.

4. Agriculture in Wellington County Zoning By-Law Review & Template for Wellington County Presentation – Janet Harrop

Janet provided a detailed presentation regarding Agriculture in Wellington County and the Zoning By-law Review and Template for Wellington County. A copy of the slide show and template have been emailed to the group. Some points of the presentation included:

- WFA identified that some members are experiencing roadblocks and difficulties with farming operations due to inconsistent ZBL (Zoning-Bylaw) provisions administered across the County
- Out of 7 municipalities, the Town of Erin was the only municipality to amend their bylaw to include on-farm diversified uses (OFDUs) as a right on agricultural properties
- The Zoning for Agriculture in Wellington County Report, which includes a zoning by-law (ZBL) template, provides a summary into the alignment of the existing Agricultural Zoning By-law permitted uses, definitions and regulations.
- The report and ZBL template is a tool that can be used to assist local planning staff in implementing zoning provisions to provide consistency across the County. The report concludes recommendations to improve facilitation of agricultural and rural development in the County.
- A PPS (Provincial Policy Statement) provides agriculture definitions that allow development and implementation of the policies across the province. Definitions include:
 - additional dwelling units
 - agriculture uses
 - o on-farm diversified uses
 - o agri-tourism (which is the largest expansion)
 - o agriculture related uses
 - prime agriculture area and land
 - residence surplus to a farming operation
 - o residence surplus to agriculture operation
 - o rural area and land
 - specialty crop areas
- Municipalities are encouraged to adopt policies that explicitly reflect PPS policies and
 criteria outlined in the Guidelines for prime agriculture areas for classifying a use as
 agricultural, agriculture related, or an on-farm diversified use. For example, battery
 energy storage is considered an on-farm diversified use which causes a loss of 2% prime
 agriculture space.

• The minimum agriculture lot area is 35.0ha in 4 townships, 10.0ha in 2 townships and 4.0ha in one township. Existing lots with less than 35.0 ha, but more than 10.1 ha, may be allowed a permitted use including agricultural uses, buildings and structure.

Janet will be presenting to lower tier municipalities starting in the fall. The full report is available on the WFA website, https://www.wfofa.on.ca/internal-documents/wellington-county-zoning-bylaw-guide-and-template

5. **County Housing Taskforce Update** – Dominique Charbonneau

A housing taskforce was created which includes elected officials and staff. The taskforce recently presented a report to Council with completed action items along with upcoming action items for both lower & upper tier municipalities. The report will be shared with the group for any feedback and suggestions.

The following is a list of questions the taskforce is requesting input on.

- 1. Is your municipality interested in support from the County to update zoning by-laws to be more supportive towards more housing? (i.e. permitting increased density, removing minimum dwelling size, considering maximum square footages, permitting employee housing/ rooming houses, pre-zoning lands, permitting modular housing, etc.)
- 2. Does your municipality see value in the County hosting a Developers/Builders Forum?
 - Offers an opportunity for Councillors, County, member municipal staff, developers, and the building industry to understand market needs and discuss housing opportunities.
 - ii. Member municipality and taskforce input will be brought in, to establish the forum/its content and overall logistics.
- 3. Is your municipality interested in working with the County to develop a new permitreview approach, where permit prioritization and review guidelines are established for permits focusing on purpose-built rental, affordable, and density-focused housing development projects?
- 4. Does your municipality see benefit in the County pursuing additional County-wide multimedia campaigns surrounding housing topics (i.e. greater density, ARUs, affordable housing, etc.)?
- 5. Does your municipality see the benefit in working with the County on developing and promoting additional marketing and educational content around the topic of ARUs?
- i. The County would devise a plan and collect input from member municipalities and the taskforce in developing the necessary content (Goal: outlining ARUs as an alternative type of housing investment)

- 6. Does your municipality see value in meeting with each of you and continue having conversations around housing within each of your municipalities?
 - i. Some municipalities have been met with already (Wellington North, Centre Wellinton, Minto; Mapleton is next)
 - ii. Specifically, to discuss current residential building trends, take-up on ARUs, examples of successful intensification, and potential actions member municipalities would like to see to support intensification

Conversations have started with planning staff and municipalities. Please share any feedback to Domingue.

ROUNDTABLE

WFA:

Living Labs has been set up at Harrcroft Acres, the farm of Janet and Ian Harrop. A
 Drop-in Open House is scheduled for July 18th. More details to come.

WFPB:

 Workshops and events will be starting again in the fall. Focus will be on NFP, caring sectors, small businesses and youth.

Erin:

- June 17th will be an Economic Development workshop for the senior leadership team, Economic Development Committee and Council.
- June 25th will be a focus group workshop and geared towards the BR+E and strategic plan. Invitations for this event will be sent soon.

County Update

- Experience Wellington top 5 things campaign has started.
- The Elora Fergus Tourism Committee shared The Grand Way is looking to increase the
 use of the conference centre, stables, trackside tents, patio parties etc. Contact the
 Grand Way if you need a location for an upcoming event.

Communications

The downtown revitalization campaign design work is scheduled to start next week.

Tourism and Taste Real

- Spring Rural romp was May 25th. Numbers were lower due to weather, however, many new locations participated. Looking to host September meeting at Tullamore Lavendar Farm.
- Farmers market passports available. Out of County residents can pick up boxes at participating County Libraries.
- Food experience guide in final edits.

Workforce:

- "Day in the Life" videos filming will start tomorrow, June 3rd, at the Wellington Terrace, and June 19th will be at Musashi.
- Credit Review information is needed. Please forward to Dominque as soon as possible.
- Annual report is due in a couple weeks.
- BR+E presentation in Guelph/Eramosa next week

Ride Well (James)

- May had 867 rides.
- Positive feedback for broader rural transportation was received at the May 16th Council meeting.

Smart Cities

- June 15th from 1-3pm, the WCMA soil exhibit will be open (<u>Not Just Dirt: Digging into the Science of Soil Museum Wellington County</u>)
- Climate Change Manager, Karen Chisholme, and Justine are starting to meet with stakeholders to notify of an Agriculture and Adaptation assessment, to understand the risks and impacts of climate damage on the agricultural system.
- Heritage grain farmer near Erin, is searching for a bakery to utilize this kind of grain in their goods. Please contact Justine with any connections.
- Justine is working with 7 Generation Greater Tkaronto Bioregion, who are hoping to match funding to climate-focused actions within a pre-approved portfolio. A main concern is with nutrient loads in the watershed. Contact Justine if you know of any programmes which should be included in the portfolio.

Talent Attraction

- Multicultural festival on July 13th. Lots of food vendors, sensory play area and exhibitors.
- Two brochures have been created and are now available
 - Employer brochure

- Job Seeker brochure
- Employer workshop for hiring new staff. More information will be provided.

Older Adult Survey

• Survey geared towards older adults in collaboration with the Guelph Wellington Senior's Association will launch from late June until August 31st. Online and paper copies are available.

Next meeting – (in person) September – date TBD

a. Please submit agenda items or topics you would like to cover in future meetings. The group is an excellent platform to give information as it is to get it from each other.

Adjourned @ 11:00am	
Christina Mann, Chair	Jane Shaw, Recording Secretary

Corporation Corporation

COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

Committee Report

To: Chair and Members of the Economic Development Committee

From: Justine Dainard, Smart Cities Manager

Date: Tuesday, June 18, 2024

Subject: Smart Cities Office – June 2024

Circular Economy

Emergency Food Plan

As noted in the April 2024 Smart Cities Office report, the Smart Cities Office worked with students in the SMART Healthy Cities Training Platform at the University of Guelph to develop the foundations and framework for an Emergency Food Plan for Wellington County.

An Emergency Food Plan is a preparedness tool for a community-level response to a critical event. Much like other emergency preparedness plans, it identifies risks, resources, and response partners, and also defines the parameters for activation, response, and deactivation. The study conducted by the students is currently being reviewed by the County Emergency Management team. The foundational work could then be shared with community organizations in order to gather feedback and identify community stakeholders.

Events in the County such as pandemic lockdowns and school fires have demonstrated that there is a local need for a coordinated emergency food response plan.

Salvation Army donates reuseable bags

Food access groups in the County are often run by volunteers who fundraise for their operating costs. Many have a need for reuseable shopping bags so that wholesale quantities of donations or purchases can be divided and taken home. These bags can be difficult to collect, and at times must be purchased using the group's limited budget.

The County's Circular Economy network includes reuse specialists such as the Salvation Army, whose National Recycling Operations recently offered a pallet of reuseable bags to be shared amongst our food access groups. Over 500 used shopping bags were collected, inspected and sorted, and are now ready for distribution to food access groups across the County.



Agriculture Support

Living Lab - Ontario Event

The County of Wellington is a partner in the federally-funded Living Lab – Ontario, which brings together farmers, organizations, and researchers. This collaborative project will take place at farms across Southern Ontario over the next four years, evaluating beneficial management practices (BMPs) addressing climate change challenges in livestock and cropping systems. Living Lab – Ontario is offering its first on-farm event at Harrcroft Acres on Thursday July 18, in the early evening; participants will learn more about the BMPs being tested on this dairy farm, and researchers will be on site to

answer questions. Ontario Soil and Crop Association will be offering free registration for this event; when details become available, they will be promoted by the County.

Waterloo Wellington Children's Groundwater Festival

Staff participated in this year's Groundwater Festival at Marden Park May 31 to June 6. Jordan Grigg and Eman Shoeib entertained and educated with games illustrating soil compaction and carbon capture. Kids were also invited to get hands-on by creating soil handprint art on large banners. Approximately 5,000 children in grades 2 to 5 visited the event this year, which has run annually for over 25 years.



ICLEI Presentation

The International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) is an international network active in over 125 countries. Focused on supporting local governments' sustainability work, ICLEI Canada offers tools, frameworks and resources to its municipal members. On June 6, staff presented to the ICLEI Partners for Climate Protection Community of Practice, sharing lessons from the County's Climate Change Mitigation Plan and Experimental Acres Programme.

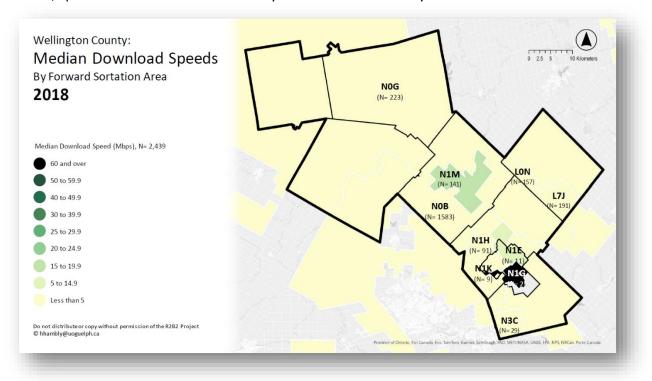


Internet Readiness and Equity

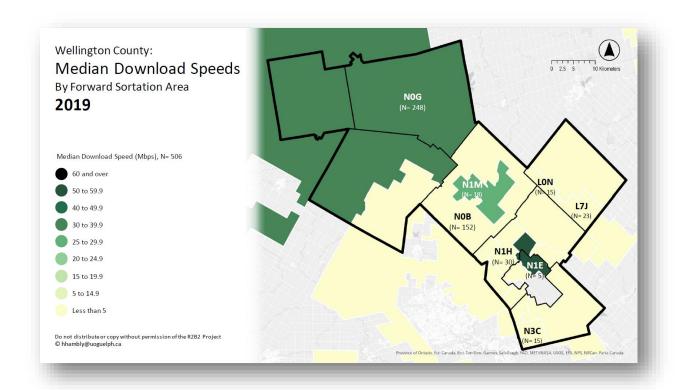
Tracking connectivity gaps

Since the County began preparing for the SWIFT Rural Broadband project in 2018, staff have worked with the Regional and Rural Broadband (R2B2) Project at the University of Guelph, as well as the Canadian Internet Registration Authority, to more fully understand local gains in connectivity. Residents and businesses have been asked to test the speed of their connection by using the Internet Performance Test available at www.wellington.ca/internet. The aggregated results from this test have been tracked over time and the R2B2 Project is able to provide contextual interpretation of the results. In the images below, download speeds (measured in megabits per second, or Mbps) are colour-coded, with yellow and light green being the slowest. As average speeds improve in each area, the colours darken. The federal government's stated goal for download speed is 50 Mbps, shown here in dark green and black.

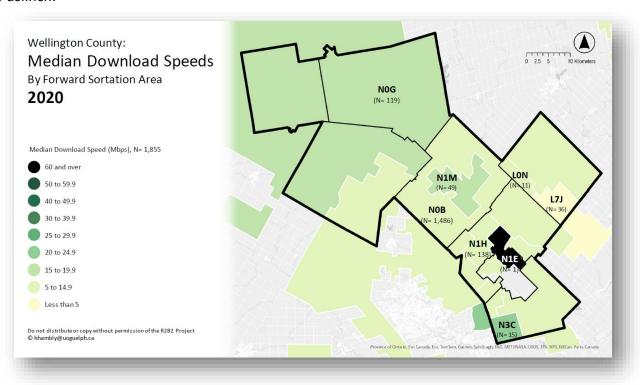
In 2018, speeds across most of the County were recorded as very slow:

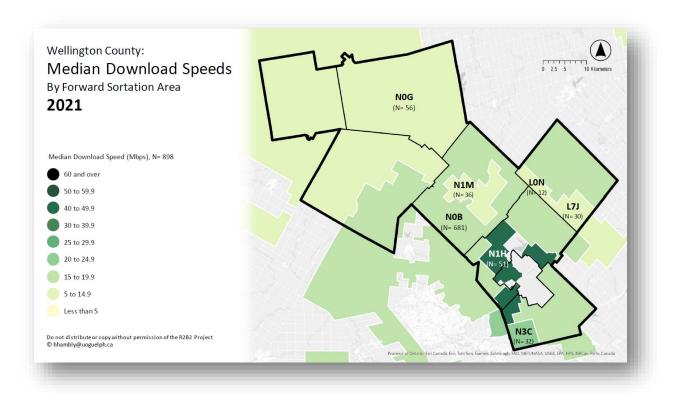


Improvements were seen the following year in Minto, Wellington North and Mapleton, most likely due to new cell tower installations. Gains are also found in Guelph/Eramosa adjacent to Guelph.

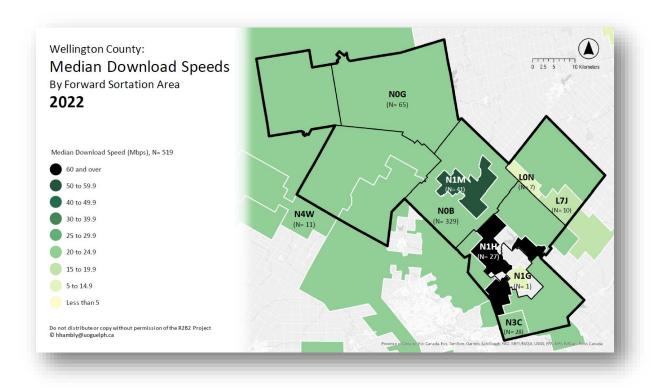


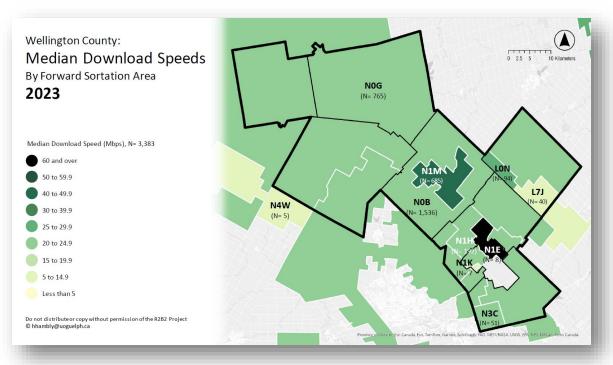
In 2020 and 2021, the impact of COVID can been seen; with increased demand on available cell towers as everyone connects from home, the fast connections once enjoyed by the north begin to slow down. There are small general gains elsewhere, and work in Waterloo region spills into one corner of Puslinch.





By 2022 and 2023, the SWIFT projects in our County are rolling out and improving average speeds, though it is clear that our most urban areas are reporting the best connectivity. The impact of aging technology continues to be seen, with speed losses showing up where demand has outpaced infrastructure.





Staff continue to work with SWIFT, CIRA, and R2B2 Project to advocate for continued expansion and improvements in connectivity speeds for the residents and businesses of Wellington County.

Strategic Action Plan:

This report relates to the following objectives and priorities in the County's Strategic Action Plan:

- Best services in place for the County's residents and businesses.
- Respect for the different members and needs of the Wellington County community, across different cultures, socio-economic backgrounds, and lived experiences.

• Always look to the future and consider sustainability impacts with respect to social, environmental, economic and fiscal realities.

Attachments:

Draft Emergency Food Plan

Recommendation:

That the Economic Development Committee approve the Smart Cities Office – June 2024 Report.

Respectfully submitted,

Justine Dainard

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Smart Cities Manager