



COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

COMMITTEE REPORT

To: Chair and Members of the Economic Development Committee
From: Crystal Ellis, Director of Economic Development
Date: Tuesday, November 16, 2021
Subject: Economic Development – November Report

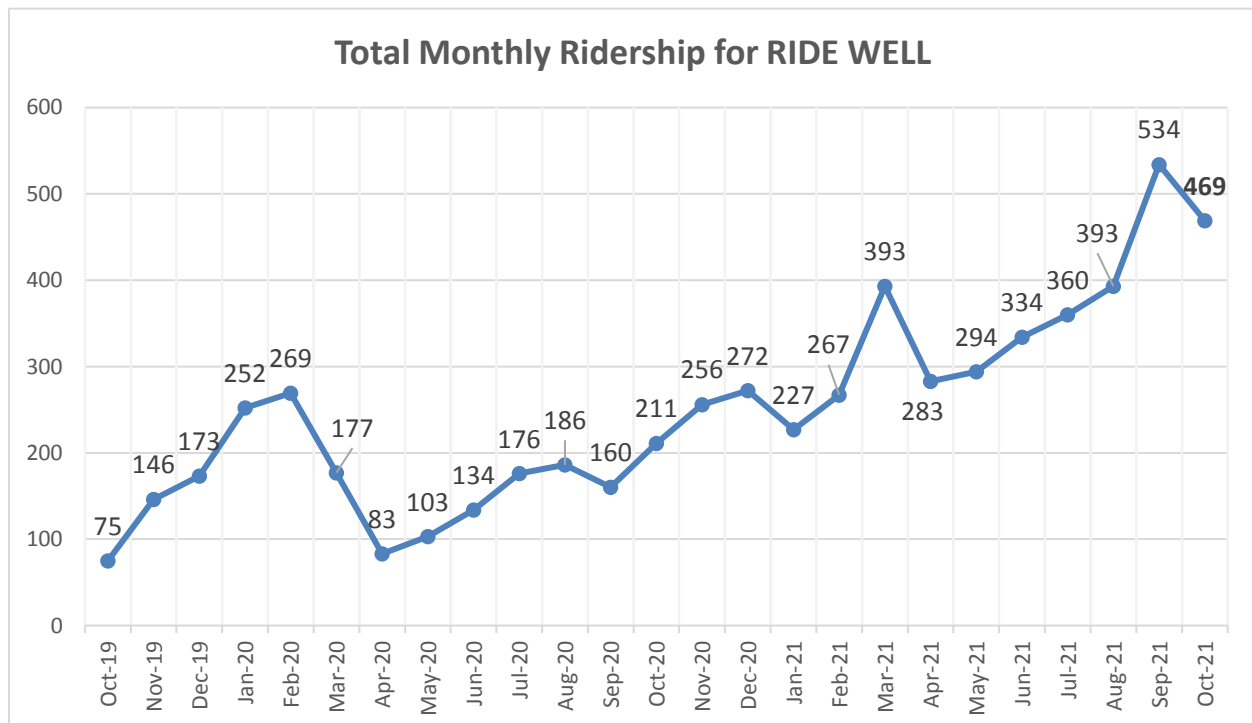
Elora Riverwalk

After some preliminary discussions with public partners for the proposed Riverwalk project, Pearle Hospitality has decided to not pursue the project at this time.

RIDE WELL

Ride Well had positive ridership in October with 469 rides, returning to its original growth trajectory. This is a decrease of 65 rides from September, but is the second highest monthly total to date. October had 70 different users (unique users), and within that group there were 17 new riders and 53 repeat riders. While these numbers are comparable to September, there was a decrease in the average ride per user to 6.7 (down from 7.3 in September). Also of note, 58 new accounts were registered in October, which is an increase of 14 from the previous month.

October is more aligned with the previous growth trajectory observed prior to September. Please see the total monthly ridership for two years of service below, as well as the top origins and destinations in October:



Top pick-up Destinations in October 2021:

Location	Description
Fergus	Centre Wellington Community Sportsplex
Fergus	Fergusson Place, Residential Complex
Mount Forest	DANA Long Manufacturing
Elora	Residential Property
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Guelph	Second Cup Coffee Co.

Top drop-off Destinations in October 2021:

Location	Description
Fergus	Centre Wellington Community Sportsplex
Fergus	Grand Abilities Adult Day Centre
Arthur	Agricultural Property
Fergus	Fergusson Place, Residential Complex
Fergus	Residential Property
Guelph	Stone Road Mall

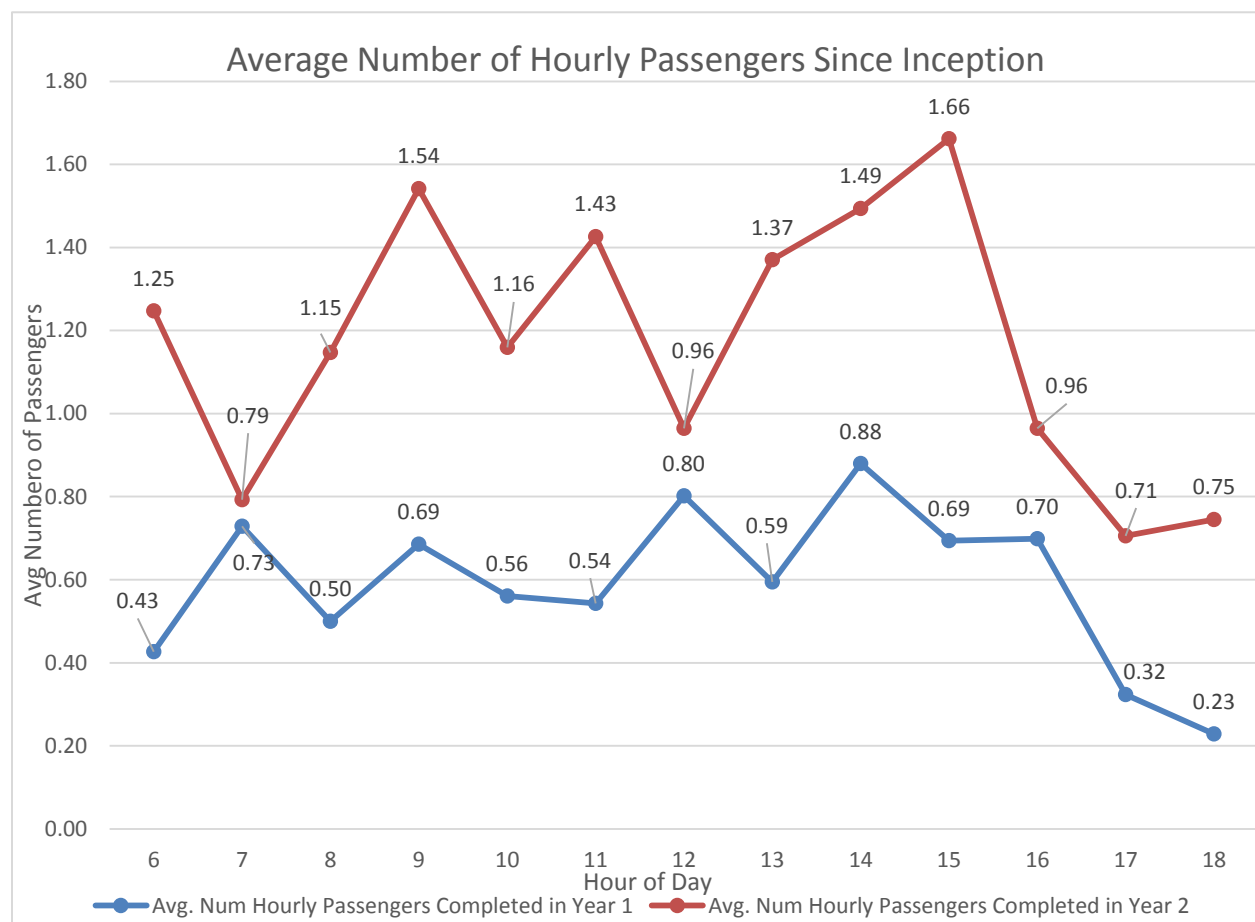
RIDE WELL Two Year Operation Overview

After two years of operation, including a pandemic which removed the ability to rideshare, Ride Well has had steady growth as the service established itself and has more than doubled its ridership.

Ride Well Stats	Year 1	Year 2	Increase
Total Ridership	1,934	3,824	98%
Average Monthly Unique Users (Active Riders)	34	45	34%
Average Rides Per User Per month	4.7	7.1	51%
Average Repeat Riders Per Month	19	35	81%
Highest Monthly Ridership	260 Rides February 2020	534 Rides September 2021	105%
Average Rides Per Week	37	73	97%
Peak Hours	2:00 pm	3:00 pm	

In Year 1, the highest monthly ridership was recorded in February 2020 with 260 rides. In Year 2, the highest monthly ridership was recorder in September 2021 with 534 rides. These annual highpoints showed a 105% increase between Year 1 and Year 2. In addition, weekly ridership has also nearly doubled. In Year 1, Ride Well averaged 37 rides per week, while Year 2 saw the rides per week increase to 73 rides per week.

Peak Hours and Performance: Ride Well has experienced several changes to its peak hours from Year One to Year Two of operation. In Year 2, Ride Well experienced the highest average volume at 3:00pm, compared to 2:00pm in Year 1. Also worth noting, 7:00am and 12:00pm were higher points of usage in Year 1, but one of the lower periods in Year 2. One explanation for these changes may be due to a decrease in usage by seniors in Year 2, which were more prominent users in Year 1 before the COVID-19 pandemic kept them at home. Another explanation may be due to the overall nature of trips. In Year 1, there was more regular usage of the service for recreational trips, such as visiting family and friends, attending social groups, etc. However, since the onset of COVID-19, Ride Well has been used more for essential trips, such as getting to and from work and appointments. The following chart shows the average number of hourly passengers since launch:



Operation Costs: The Cost Recovery Rate is the rate at which Ride Well recoups its costs through passenger revenue. Therefore, the more rides that are serviced within a given supply of vehicle hours, the better the cost recovery. In Year 2, Ride Well had reduced vehicle hours to accommodate a lower demand from COVID-19. However, as ridership grew Ride Well maintained its supply of vehicle hours until an eventual slight increase in October 2021. As a result, the cost recovery improved significantly from Year 1 to Year 2 due to the limited vehicles hours. However, it is important to consider that the Ride Well programme is heavily subsidized. The following table illustrates cost recovery:

Time Period	Cost Recovery Ratio in Year 1	Average Vehicle Hours per Day	Cost Recovery Ratio in Year 2	Average Vehicle Hours per Day	Industry Average On-Demand Cost Recovery	Industry Average Fixed-Route Cost Recovery
October to December	4%	43	15%	25	15%	8%
January to March	7%	37	15%	25		
April to June	6%	26	15%	26		
July to September	10%	26	22%	26		

Origin and Destination Locations: Ride Well has seen similar trends in pick-up and drop-off locations from Year 1 to Year 2, and Centre Wellington continues to host the majority of rides. Between Year 1 and Year 2, it is clear that rides remain centralized in Centre Wellington. There was broader coverage in Guelph in Year 2 in comparison to Year 1, due to the elimination of transfer points. There is also a modest increase to rides occurring in Wellington North, likely due to increased awareness of the programme.

Overall, the Ride Well programme is growing and staff hope to begin operating the service with the intended rideshare model as Covid restrictions begin to ease further. This will help ease the pressure of only allowing one booking per trip and create a more cost effective and efficient service.

Invest WELL Community Improvement Programme (CIP)

In the month of October, we received and approved the following three CIP applications from the Town of Erin.

Erin Hill Acres is a new year-round agri-tourism business that includes Christmas tree farm that was previously operated as Wintersinger's Tree Farm. A CIP application was submitted for a project that involves upgrades to the barn, workshop, retail space, natural features, and signage on the agricultural property. In total, the submitted proposal has an estimated construction value of \$128,780 over two years. The project was approved for \$10,000 under the Invest MORE funding stream.

Organic Art Tattoo submitted a CIP application for façade improvements to their recently purchased property located at 52 Main St., Erin. Improvements include new signage, paint, windows, and upgrades to the siding on the storefront, as well as interior upgrades to the lighting and plumbing. In total, the submitted proposal has an estimated construction value of \$21,437 and was approved for \$7,500 under the Invest MORE funding stream.

The Hummingbird, a rural event and wedding venue submitted a CIP application to complete improvements to the business. The project includes new signage, lighting, natural features, and structural upgrades to the century barn. In total, the submitted proposal has an estimated

construction value of \$27,460 and was approved for \$7,500 under the Invest MORE funding stream.

The Rexall in Downtown Erin has completed their façade improvement project. Please see below for before and after pictures of the completed work:



Rexall façade before



Rexall façade after.

Tourism Signage Programme

Applications for the Wellington County Tourism Signage Programme are due by November 30, 2021. To date, we have received five applications. County staff will continue to reach-out to potential businesses that may be interested leading up to the deadline.

Tourism Video Footage

Over the summer and into fall, staff worked with Tivoli Films of Elora to record footage for a series of Wellington County Tourism Shorts to be released in 2022. Ten different 30-second commercials will be created, each focusing on a specific type of experience and will be used for social media and website promotion.

Themes include:

- Unique accommodations: RV camping, glamping, container bed and breakfast
- On the water: sailing, canoeing, conservation areas
- Food and Retail: restaurant, patio, farmers' market, retail shopping
- Picnic: young people and family picnics, coffee takeout, butter tarts
- Equine: horse yoga, horse racing, horses on pasture, horse statue, trail rides
- Museum: galleries, barn, outside shots
- Retro outings: drive-in cinema, chip truck
- History buffs: Aberfoyle Antique Market, Lynes Blacksmith shop, WMCA, Railway Heritage
- Farm adventures: sunflower field, cidery, alpaca yoga, farm animals, pumpkin patch
- Outdoor: hiking, biking, canoeing

Taste Real Fall Rural Romp

The Taste Real fall event promoting fall food and popular fall outings concluded on October 31. The event included a variety of components, including agriculture educational videos, in-person and virtual events, and an online Fall Flavours map to encourage support of a local businesses. A new feature this year, Rural Romp kits with family-friendly fall activities containing seasonal recipes, a local food map treasure hunt kit, colouring pages, and locally grown pumpkin seeds. Individuals were encouraged to participate in two different contests for a chance to win one of 10 gift cards to local businesses. The initiative was very well received and 327 Romp Kits were requested and sent to local families.

Holiday Food and Gift Guide

The seasonal shop local initiative is back with new marketing visuals. Working with the Communications Division, staff collected and photographed a selection of Wellington County farm and food items to create a new cover image for the online gift guide. The guide is being promoted through radio, print and social media and ties in with the local chambers' Shop Wellington County Campaign.

Talent Attraction

Please find attached to this report the Wellington County Welcoming and Inclusion Assessment Survey, Key Findings and Actions.

Smart Cities – Our Food Future

Cyber Security in Agriculture Workshops: Agriculture is becoming increasingly high-tech, and during the last year of lockdowns many local farms took their businesses online for various activities. With this growing connectivity comes the responsibility of managing more data, and the risk of being vulnerable to cybersecurity threats. To support our farmers' knowledge of these issues, we are offering two one-hour workshops on cybersecurity in agriculture.

- Monday, November 22, from 6:30 to 7:30 pm, at the Wellington County Museum and Archives, Aboyne Hall
- Monday November 29 from 6:30 to 7:30 pm, at the Harriston Library Branch

The workshops will be run by the Community Safety Knowledge Alliance (cskacanada.ca) and feature speaker Ritesh Kotak, a cybersecurity expert and frequent guest panelist on CTV news. To provide further help and to gain a deeper understanding of common issues needing future support, we will be offering ten workshop participants a follow-up visit from a local cybersecurity consultant. These on-farm visits will offer one-on-one coaching in best practices and address site-specific questions. These events will be free, but pre-registration is required; sign-up or learn more at www.wellington.ca/Internet.

Other Activities

- 22 enquires received from October 8 to November 8. Ride Well, Taste Real, Housing, Venue/Property Enquiry, Business/General.
- 2022 pay-to-play tourism signage application deadline is November 30, 2021 and installation will take place in Spring 2021.

- Our Food Future presentation at the 2021 Municipal Agriculture Economic Development and Planning Forum, hosted by York Region and OMAFRA, on November 4.
- Assisting with the development of a Gin Trail, involving four local distilleries.
- Consulted with local businesses on creative ways to sell their products and find local suppliers.
- Economic Development staff are assisting with WMCA Christmas Market planning.
- Upcycled Food Festival - Upcycled Ramen Noodles Meal Kit launches November 19 at the Wooly Pub in Guelph. Stop by at 4:00 pm for speeches, samples, and sales of the kit.
- Business e-newsletter sent October 21.
- Taste Real Newsletter sent October 1.

Recommendation:

That the Economic Development Committee approve the Economic Development November Report.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Crystal Ellis', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Crystal Ellis
Director of Economic Development