



COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

COMMITTEE REPORT

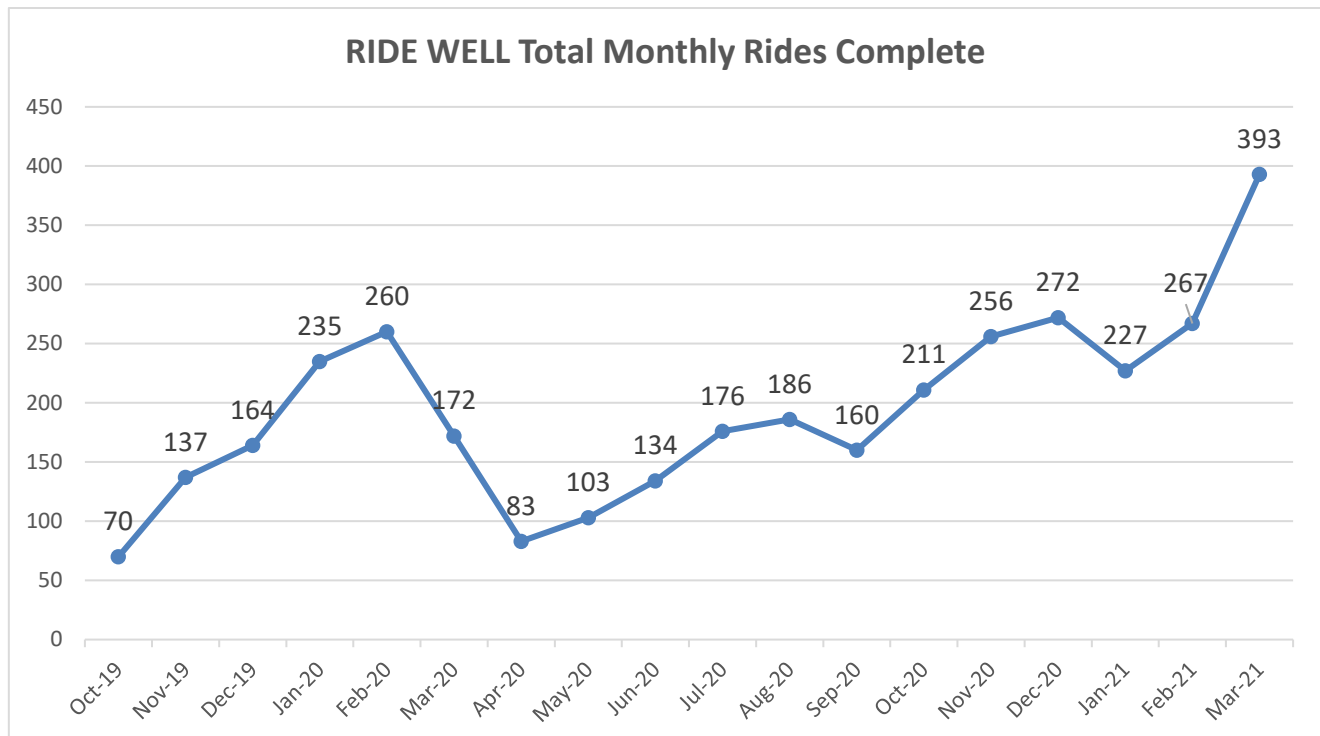
To: Chair and Members of the Economic Development Committee
From: Crystal Ellis, Director of Economic Development
Date: Tuesday, April 20, 2021
Subject: **Economic Development – April Report**

RIDE WELL

March RIDE WELL activity was significantly higher than previous months, reaching 393 completed rides, 126 additional rides compared to the previous month. With COVID-19 restriction in the orange level, people were able to get out more.

Interesting to note is that February 2021 ridership is in line with pre-pandemic February 2020 ridership. At the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, RIDE WELL numbers were reflective of March 2021 number however we faced the onset of Covid-19 shutdowns in mid-March 2020 and numbers stalled. We anticipate that April numbers will be lower with shutdown restrictions coming into effect and will reflect January 2021 lockdown activity. The chart below illustrates the ridership trajectory since its launch in October 2019.

The Province has also asked that advertisements for transit services focus on use for essential purposes only and that we continue to promote COVID-19 safety protocols.



Rural Transit Fund

On March 29 Infrastructure Canada announced the first federal fund dedicated to rural transit solutions. The Honourable Catherine McKenna, Minister of Infrastructure and Communities and the Honourable Maryam Monsef, Minister for Rural Economic Development, announced \$250 million over five years to help address the transit needs of Canadians living in rural, remote and small communities. We were honoured to be a part of the announcement and showcase RIDE WELL as an example of a rural transit solution.

Community Improvement Programme (CIP)

One CIP application was received in March. A \$10,000 Invest Well CIP grant was approved for Geddes St. Market in Elora. The project provides a critical business and much needed grocery store in Elora, renovating the previous grocery store that has been vacant for some time.

Taste Real

This year, Taste Real will guide several collaborative initiatives for Wellington County farmers' markets, including the creation of a Farmers' Market Trails Passport. This initiative set to launch in early summer encourages locals to visit different markets and support local businesses. Taste Real is also assisting markets to collaboratively fill available vendor spots as they are preparing to open for the season.

2021 Farmers' Markets Information

Market	Location	Day	Operating Period	Hours
Aberfoyle Farmers' Market	23 Brock Road South, Aberfoyle	Saturday	May 29 - October 30	8:00 am – 1:00 pm
Elora Farmers' Market	127 Mill Street East, Elora at Bissel Park	Saturday	May 1 - October 30	9:00 am - 1:00 pm
Elora Farmers' Market	7445 Wellington County Road 21, Elora at Grand River Raceway	Saturday	Winter dates TBD	
Erin Farmers' Market	109 Main Street, Erin at McMillian Park	Friday	June 25 – September 24	3:00 pm - 7:00 pm
Guelph Farmers' Market	2 Gordon Street, Guelph	Saturday	Year Round	7:00 am- 12:00 pm
Rockwood Farmers' Market	110 Rockmosa Dr. Rockwood	Wednesday	June 9 - October 6	4:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Minto Farmers' Market	164 William Street, Palmerston at Railway Museum	Saturday	June 5 – September 5	9:00 am – 12:00 pm
Wellington North	320 King Street East, Mount Forest at Victory Community Centre	Saturday	June 19 – September 25	8:30 am – 12:00 pm

Local Food Map distribution is underway with over 10,000 copies delivered to businesses and libraries. In an effort to reach even more County residents, Local Food Maps will be included with all of the 2021 Green Legacy tree orders. We spotted the Food Map on display in an Elora storefront, pictured on the right.

2021 Spring Rural Romp planning is underway. Due to the uncertainty of public health directives, the event will be changed to a month-long campaign for May and will include all areas of Wellington County, rather than the traditional one-day northern Wellington County event. The campaign includes shop local promotions, virtual farm and food activities, and a Spring Rural Romp box with home delivery.



Economic Development staff assisted Wellington County Museum and Archive (WCMA) programming staff with a new **'County Cocktail Series'** exploring bootlegging and temperance stories in the County. Monthly videos will be released from April to October featuring a signature cocktail recipe, highlighting local distilleries and related businesses. Cocktails can be re-created at home with locally sourced ingredients.

Taste Real promotions in March included seasonal blogs about Farm Shares, Local Lamb, and Maple Syrup. In addition to promoting local maple syrup farms, staff worked closely with the County's Indigenous Advisory Committee to include information about the importance of maple sap/syrup in Indigenous cultures on the website. The Taste Real Toque Magazine business feature highlighted Arthur Greenhouses and top ten destinations to get you growing in Wellington County. Additionally, advertising to promote the Local Food Map and Explore Wellington was featured in the Guelph Mercury Tribune and Community Guide in March.

New Taste Real Partner Businesses

- Silver Creek Aquaculture, Erin
- Ambiances Gourmandes, Centre Wellington
- Chickadee Hill Farm, Erin

The **Wellington County Online Takeout Map** page saw a temporary decline in web traffic in March as restaurants started to open for in person dining. As a response to restaurant closures in early April due

to shut down regulations, staff resumed marketing the map again to support businesses. Feedback from businesses and member municipalities has been overwhelmingly positive and some are leveraging the takeout map in their local advertising campaigns. An example is the Centre Wellington Eat Local advertisement

Talent Attraction

Talent attraction staff continue to connect with municipalities, support agencies and employers providing talent attraction services. The Welcoming Assessment project is underway. A draft Newcomer questionnaire has been completed and is being currently circulated for review. There will also be an Organization and Employer Questionnaire developed. Efforts are underway to connect with key stakeholders to roll out the survey.

Staff participated in the World Skills Employment Centre Virtual Job Fair and Symposium held from March 23-25. On March 30, Aaron delivered a presentation as part of Centre Wellington's Chamber of Commerce 'Labour Support Webinar', highlighting County's support to help employers access newcomers to address labour shortage challenges.



Smart Cities – Our Food Future

The Smart Cities Office received confirmation of a successful funding application from the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev) for \$5 million dollars. This successful project will create the Circular Opportunity Innovation Launchpad (COIL). COIL will amplify and extend the initial local circular economy work of Our Food Future, creating projects with more far-reaching impact and largescale support beyond our region. The project will address the food system and add the wider context challenges of the environment and low-carbon economy sectors. This work will support ongoing local economic recovery while also establishing Guelph-Wellington as a centre of circular food economy expertise.

Food Hub Feasibility Study

The Smart Cities Office has partnered with Next Generation Manufacturing Canada (NGEN), Canada's Advanced Manufacturing Supercluster, to undertake a regional Food Hub Feasibility. A project RFP was issued in March and the successful proposal was received from Michael Keegan & Associates/Pollinate Networks Inc.

The Food Hub Feasibility study will examine the local path of food from farm to factory to fork, assessing each part of our regional food system. It is intended to produce a gap analysis understanding of the infrastructure, regulations, and partnerships that currently make up our food system, asking whether there any missing pieces or supports. Are we equipping our local food system with what it needs to continue to be resilient? What do our Producers and Processors feel is working or not working? The Smart City Office will be reaching out to stakeholders during this stage of the study. The

study will also assess other food hubs locally, nationally and internationally. The partnership with NGEN ensures that our assessment will include recommendations which position our region well for future needs of local businesses.

Rural Internet guidebook

As part of our goal to create a connected rural community, staff have been working with Wilton Consulting to develop a Rural Internet guidebook, an entry level informational piece to help educate residents about how the internet work and the opportunities that connectivity provides. The project is in final stages and will be available in May.

Other Activities

- Updated Covid-19 Funding Programmes to Support Business listing is attached to this report.
- 32 enquiries were received including: Ride Well (14), Agricultural grants, Business enquiry, Business Directory, CIP, Farmers' Markets, Food Access, Housing Strategy, Local Food Map, Taste Real, Tourism, Visitor Map, and Workforce.
- Taste Real newsletter sent on March 19 features maple syrup, plant nurseries and greenhouses, local lamb, CSA farm shares, bakeries, and farm-fresh meats.
- Crystal participated as a judge for the R-Purpose MICRO Winter 2021 Demo Day. The event celebrated local businesses who completed the 12-week Provision Coalition/Our Food Future programme that included training, mentorship and practical tools to help build a future-proof strategy for their food/beverage business.
- Staff provided economic content for Treasury's annual Budget Book.

Recommendation:

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

Respectfully submitted,



Crystal Ellis
Director of Economic Development