



# COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

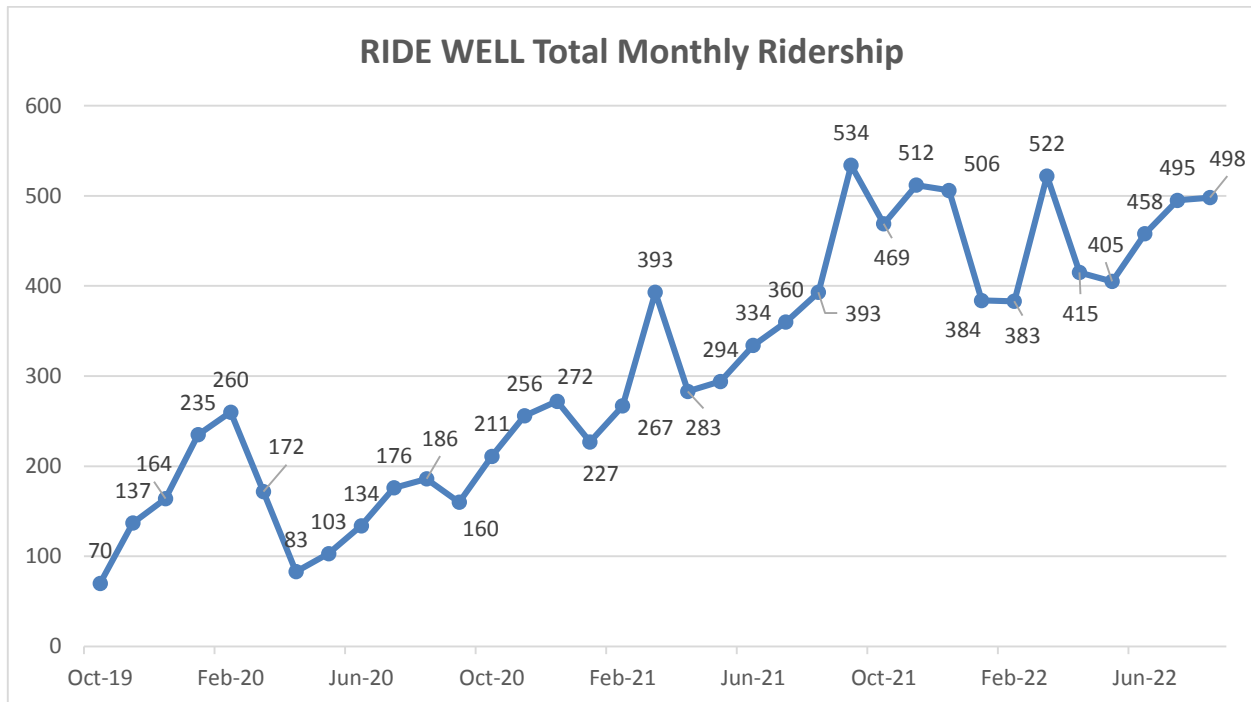
## COMMITTEE REPORT

**To:** Chair and Members of the Economic Development Committee  
**From:** Jana Burns, Wellington Place Administrator  
**Date:** Tuesday, September 20, 2022  
**Subject:** Economic Development – September Report

### RIDE WELL Rural Transportation

The County RIDE WELL service grew in ridership over the summer months. The mask mandate discontinued in June, coinciding with the ability to rideshare again, and hence, the ability to service more users.

The service experienced a shortage of one of four drivers over the summer, which resulted in one ride being abandoned after the booking was made. RideCo, the service provider, retained a fourth driver and returned to normal supply at the start of September. Staff are optimistic that a full roster of drivers will continue to yield growth for the service. The following graph shows total ridership since service launch:



Shared rides fluctuate month-over-month depending on location and how often the system can efficiently pair riders together. In August, RIDE WELL saw its highest rate of shared rides occurring at 22% (108 rides) of the 498 total rides being shared.

The service registered 47 new users over the summer months and averaged between 21 and 25 rides per day.

Economic Development staff have met with Dillon Consulting in August to initiate a RIDE WELL service review, as the contract with RideCo expires March 2023. The review considers the suggestions provided by users to date in addition to the quantitative data provided by RideCo. As staff have recently been made aware that RideCo wishes to continue providing the software only, this operational implication will also be considered.

### **County Community Improvement Programme (CIP)**

Congratulations to Morriston Medical Centre for completing their CIP project in Puslinch. Applicants were approved for \$10,000 to construct a new medical centre in Downtown Morriston. The following illustrates before and after construction:

Before:



After:





Congratulations also to The Old Post Café for completing their CIP project in Minto over the summer. The Old Post Café was approved for \$2,500 to expand their patio and improve their façade in downtown Harriston. The following pictures show the finished project:

In July, staff received an application from Crepe Company in Puslinch. The owners of Crepe Company will be relocating their restaurant business from Oakville to downtown Murrison. The new restaurant will be located at the previously owned Envers restaurant location (42 Queen St,



Murrison). County staff have approved a \$10,000 grant for Crepe Company to complete an interior and exterior façade improvement on the vacant location. Staff will next meet with the applicants to offer assistance with connecting to suppliers, marketing and business resources.

August saw the launch of a new landing page for the County CIP, highlighting completed and providing programme information. The webpage can be found at <https://www.wellington.ca/en/business/ed-completed-cip-projects.aspx>

### County CIP Review

Staff met with RCI Consulting late August as part of a review and update of the County CIP. RCI, who is advantageously conducting this review at the same time as the Township of Centre Wellington, proposed the following key changes to the programme:

Current Programme Name	Current Programme Information	Revised Programme Name	Revised Programme Information	Summary of Changes
<b>1) Invest READY Pre-Development Design/Study Grant</b>	Grant available for up to 100% of eligible costs to a maximum of \$20,000 per project or property.	<b>1) Study Grant</b>	Grants available for up to 100% of eligible costs to a maximum of \$10,000 per study, and a maximum of 2 study grants per project.	Reduction from \$20,000 to \$10,000, but two studies per project to allow County to be more flexible with funding.
<b>2) Invest MORE Grant</b>	Grant available for up to 50% of total eligible costs to a maximum of \$10,000.  Invest MORE Grants cannot be stacked with other Invest WELL incentives (ex. the Tax Increment Equivalent Grant).	<b>2) Minor Activity Grant</b>	Grants available up to 50% of total eligible costs to a maximum of \$20,000.  Minor Activity Grants can be stacked (combined) with TIEG only if: a) It is an Industrial/Manufacturing project, includes attainable housing, or has new or innovative farm related agriculture/agri-business. AND; b) The member-municipality CIP permits stacking and an application has been approved by the local municipality.	Maximum grant increased from \$10,000 to \$20,000 to better incentivize businesses to take on CIP projects.  Stacking is permitted with the County TIEG if the project is a targeted use and the member-municipality CIP allows stacking.

<b>3) Invest READY Tax Increment Equivalent Grant (TIEG)</b>	Annual County grant equal to tax incremental increase for up to 5 years after project completion and MPAC reassessment. Grants may be equal to a maximum of 100%, 80%, 60%, 40%, and 20%, in years 1,2,3,4, and 5 respectively.  Stacking with other grants is not permitted	<b>3) Major Activity Grant</b>	Annual County grant equal to tax incremental increase for up to 5 years after project completion and MPAC reassessment. Grants may be equal to a maximum of 100%, 80%, 60%, 40%, and 20%, in years 1,2,3,4, and 5, respectively.  Stacking with Minor Activity grant may be permitted. Please see above for eligibility.	Stacking to be permitted with Minor Activity Grant if the project is a targeted use and the member-municipality CIP allows stacking.
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### Tourism Signage

In total, ten new signs and three new signage locations were installed this summer. Two of the new signage locations are positioned in Puslinch to better service businesses in that community. In total, nine businesses participated in the 2022 signage programme, seven of which were new participants.

### Tourism Strategy Development

With funding received via Fed Dev Ontario’s Tourism Relief Fund, staff are in the process of working with Deloitte Ltd. to develop a comprehensive three-year tourism strategy to define how the County will approach tourism, build the ‘Experience Wellington’ programme, and further support the sector within its seven member municipalities. The project will provide suggestions for the County’s role within the tourism ecosystem and apply a strategic regional approach to support, elevate, and leverage municipal and industry-led tourism initiatives.

### Cycling Tourism Development

Tourism Relief funding also supports the rollout of the [Ontario by Bike Network](#) across Wellington County and Guelph. The implementation includes a regional profile and toolkit featuring bike trails, assets, and resources for bike tourists and businesses alike. Connecting with the Ontario-wide bike network aligns Wellington County with all neighbouring regions and allows cycling routes and experiences to continue pan-regionally. Ontario By Bike is a key resource for cyclists from Ontario and beyond for choosing bike destinations and an excellent way to showcase Wellington County’s businesses and key tourism assets. Local tourism businesses can now register at no cost to be listed on the website as a bike-friendly business if they fulfill the necessary criteria, allowing them to take full advantage of free marketing opportunities through the network.

In addition, Ontario By Bike will conduct a Destination Assessment to provide recommendations on next steps and opportunities for further cycle tourism product development and infrastructure improvement locally. One of two in-person business stakeholder workshops held by Ontario By Bike on September 12.



### Tourism Shorts

Eight promotional [tourism short videos](#) were released in August to promote a variety of businesses and experiences in Wellington County. Themes include Trails, Equine, Food, Retro Outings, Unique Accommodations, History, Water Fun, and Farm Adventures. These videos are available on the [experiencewellington.ca](http://experiencewellington.ca) website and the County YouTube Channel. The videos are exclusively promoted via social media with initial statistics showing over 85,000 through plays, with numbers increasing into the fall.

### Taste Real

The popular [Fall Rural Romp](#) returns as a one-day in-person event on September 24 showcasing farm and food businesses throughout Centre and Southern Wellington County. 19 locations are open to the public, including farms, farmers' markets, a brewery, cidery, distillery, coffee roastery, patisserie, and the Bradford Whitcomb Green Legacy Nursery. Each Rural Romp stop offers a different experience and activities to learn about food and agriculture unique to their location. The self-guided tour is free to attend, and rompers are encouraged to purchase from the businesses they visit.





The new [Food Experience Guide](#), a companion guide to the popular local food map showcasing farm and food experiences, has been flying off the shelves. Over 14,000 copies have so far been distributed to libraries, tourism outlets, farmers' markets, and select business locations, including overnight accommodations in Centre Wellington and Guelph. The brochures were also available at local events, including the Rockwood Party in the Park, the Mount Forest Fireworks Festival, the Erin Musical Ride, the Fergus Fall Fair, and the Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) in Toronto through a free partnership with an agriculture information booth.

### Farmers' Market Initiatives

The award-winning [Farmers' Market Box](#) series continues to be a popular way to support local markets and farmers this year. While the series ended in September, it featured a curated local food box from a different local market every second week beginning June.

A total of 447 boxes were sold generating \$28,133 in revenue. Of that, \$26,623 went directly to local businesses and markets, an increase of \$1,784 over 2021.

Each of the eight local markets curated its own box featuring 9 to 13 vendors each. This initiative continues to prove to be an excellent way to promote local markets, support the smaller and emerging farm and food businesses and showcase the excellent variety of local foods and products available in Wellington County.

Staff are currently planning a collaborative Holiday Box featuring one unique item from each market with delivery in December.



The Minto Farmers' Market Box was delivered on August 16

The **Farmers' Market Trail** saw increased attention in the 2022 season with markets running out of trail passports by early August, prompting an additional print run. Overall, 3,000 farmers' market passports were distributed through local markets, tourism outlets, and via direct request through the Economic Development Office, a 50% increase over last year. The trail encourages residents and visitors to explore all 8 local markets and their communities with an opportunity to stamp the trail passport for a chance to win a prize.

### Attainable Housing

In person consultations led by County Planning and Economic Development have begun with member municipal CAOs, EDOs, CBOs and Planning staff, where available. The purpose of the consultations is to understand how the County can support local efforts to increase the supply of housing options. The first meeting was held early September, with the next municipality scheduled for this week.

The Public Awareness fall campaign is being drafted, and will feature heavier content in social media and newspaper articles to maintain awareness of the key issues that lack of housing presents to Wellington County.

A County Housing Taskforce meeting will be scheduled for an update of the project, a review of the fall media campaign and to share the information collected through the municipal consultations.

**MAKE WELLINGTON COUNTY HOME**  
Everyone should be able to live here

## The Top 10 reasons why we need diverse housing options in our community

- 1 Strong local economy**  
Businesses need to fill jobs - we lose valuable members of our workforce if they relocate to different communities.
- 2 Volunteering and community engagement**  
When we keep our seniors here, and when people commute less, they have more time to make a difference in our community.
- 3 Accelerate innovation**  
When new people move here, they bring new skills, experience, knowledge and ideas that benefit our economy and our community.
- 4 Keep essential caregivers here**  
Our healthcare, elder care and social service system all depend on dedicated staff who get to know us and provide superb care for us.
- 5 Rich and diverse culture**  
Welcoming new people here by having enough housing options brings their diverse experiences and knowledge to share in our community.
- 6 Reduced impact on social services**  
When people are under less stress, or don't need housing support, our social services can be allocated to more urgent cases.
- 7 Boost tourism and shop local**  
Hospitality and retail businesses that can attract staff can be open longer and provide a better experience for visitors.
- 8 Keep our young talent**  
As they leave home, young adults need access to housing options that suit their needs - if we lose them, we lose their amazing potential, too.
- 9 The best dining experiences**  
Restaurants are struggling to retain staff, resulting in reduced hours or even permanent closure.
- 10 It's the right thing to do**  
We have always been a caring, welcoming community that does what's right to help people thrive.

Everyone should be able to live here



### Three Year Plan

Staff are developing a 2023 to 2026 County Economic Development Plan for Committee review in November. Member municipalities have each supplied responses to a survey by staff, enquiring as to individual municipal and agency priorities, partnership opportunities and support.

Consultations are now being booked with the member municipalities to ensure the proposed activities and direction meet the objectives we collectively aim to achieve over the next three years in Wellington County. The County has been collaborating and in certain cases financially supporting specific projects delivered by our business resource agencies. The same consultations will be held with the agencies to align efforts.

### Other Activities

- Staff coordinated a business resources meeting to support the proposed Agrihood development in Mapleton
- TR newsletters sent on June 23, July 22, and September 9
- Festival and Events newsletters sent on June 30, July 29, and September 9
- Taste Real promoted [Food Day Canada Activities](#) across the County
- Christina was interviewed by the Grand 101, and Magic / CJOY Radio to talk about the Food Experience Guide and local festivals and events.
- Business visit with Cox Creek Winery on July 22
- Economic Development participated in the Rockwood Party in the Park event on July 28 along with other County Departments
- Supported the Erin Agricultural Society's Musical Ride Event through advertising and providing content for swag bags
- Explore Wellington Tourism Ad in the Erin Life Magazine
- Toque Magazine Business Feature Corwhin Herbs and Produce, Puslinch, and seasonal Top 10 Tour and Taste Adventures in Wellington County
- Provided materials for Town of Minto Newcomer Welcome bags
- [Top 5 Things To Do In Wellington County This Week](#) posts continue over the summer into fall recording 1,800 page views so far.

### Recommendation:

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

Respectfully submitted,



Jana Burns  
Wellington Place Administrator

