



COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

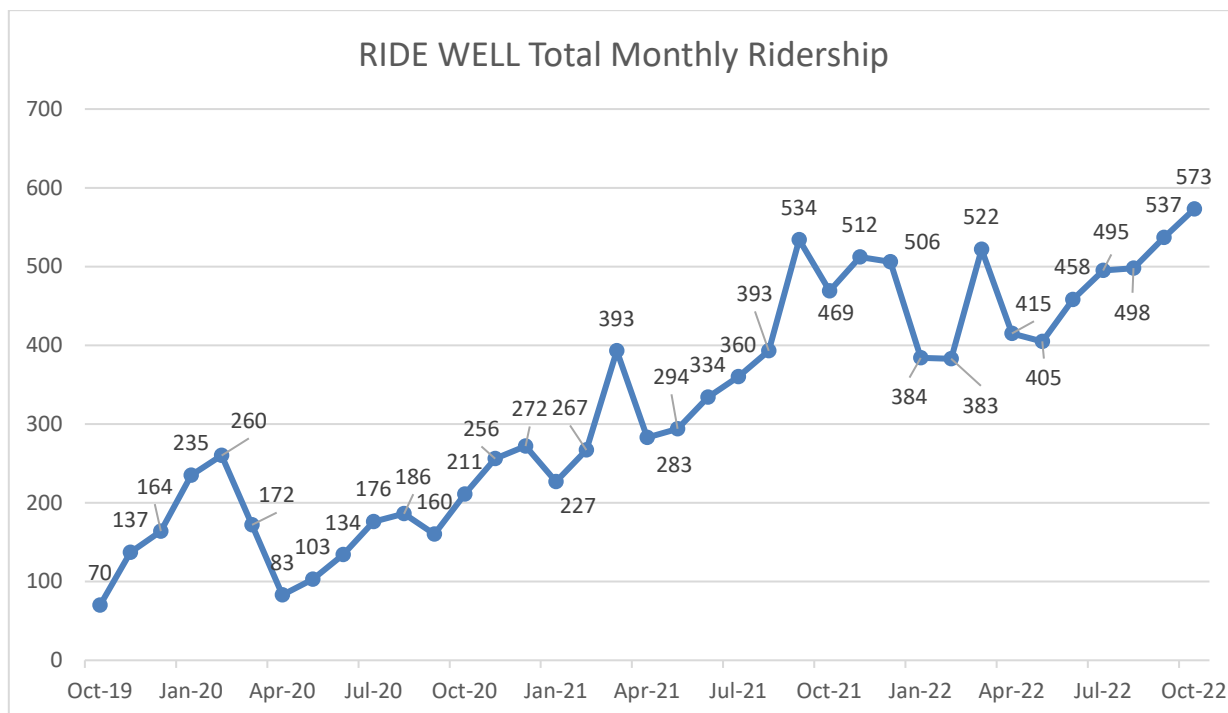
COMMITTEE REPORT

To: Chair and Members of the Economic Development Committee
From: Jana Burns, Wellington Place Administrator
Date: Tuesday, November 29, 2022
Subject: Economic Development – November Report

RIDE WELL Rural Transportation

RIDE WELL has continued its growth trajectory in September and October. September serviced 537 rides, while October saw 573 completed rides. These two months represent the highest monthly totals for the service to date. This was partly achieved by adding a fourth driver to the service, thus returning to a full roster in October.

Ridership data shows that despite 12 new riders joined the service last month, the increase is mainly due to the 88 existing users requesting rides more often. Average rides per user have increased, and while not substantiated, existing riders seem to be getting more comfortable with using the service regularly. Growth may also be a result of higher costs due to inflation and reduced alternative options in Wellington County. For example, Elliott Bus Lines no longer provides daily commuter service to Guelph, and Denny’s Bus Lines only provides service between Guelph-Erin-Orangeville if there is sufficient demand. RIDE WELL has maintained its low price, which may be encouraging more people to use the service as fuel costs and inflation increase. The growth in the service is illustrated in the chart below.



Ridesharing has taken place consistently in 20% of rides, and is concentrated within Centre Wellington, and between Centre Wellington and Guelph.

The following table shows this type of monthly performance over the last quarter:

Month	Rides/ Bookings	Passengers /Seats	Unique users	New users	Average rides per user	Average Rides Per Day	New accounts registered
August 2022	498	512	88	13	5.7	22.6	53
September 2022	537	555	97	20	5.5	25.6	59
October 2022	573	588	88	12	6.7	28.7	41

In September, new RIDE WELL postcards were developed to quickly provide basic information about the service. So far, 1,000 postcards have been distributed to the local municipal offices, Victoria Park Senior Centre, RIDE WELL vehicles, and to Guelph-Owen Sound Transportation (GOST) buses. Distribution will continue into December across the County in effort to further spread the word about the service.

Radio Ads also continued through the month of October across all three Wellington County stations. To promote the service to youth, staff established a partnership with the Upper Grand District School Board's Continuing Education Programme. Youth between the ages of 15 and 29 will be able to use the service at a 20% discount to attend Continuing Education activities. Staff also continue to work with Dillon Consulting on the service review and are expecting a first draft in December.

Community Improvement Programme (CIP)

Congratulations to Reunion for completing their CIP in Puslinch. Reunion was approved for \$10,000 under the Invest MORE grant to renovate a vacant building, which was previously the Envers restaurant, in downtown Morriston.

The Creperie is owned by two long time restaurant owners from Oakville, who relocated their Creperie to Morriston, based on the customer proximity both east and west, in addition to the heritage building. Reunion is now open to the public, and photos of the renovation are below.

FACADE: BEFORE



FACADE: AFTER



In October, County staff received and approved an additional project submitted by Arthur Ace Hardware. This project will convert three vacant commercial units at 480 Smith St., Arthur, ON into a new hardware store. The project has been approved for \$2,500 for a full façade improvement.

In total, the County received six CIP applications resulting in \$30,000 in funding for businesses in 2022. This low number can be attributed to post-pandemic recovery (material costs and labour, general uncertainty), as well as limited marketing for the Programme, as it is currently in review.

Holiday Experiences and Shop Local Campaign

The new [Holiday Happenings](#) in Wellington County campaign promotes local events, and experiences, and supports local businesses during the Holiday season. From Christmas tree farms and unique downtown shops to parades and winter events, locals and visitors can see what is happening in each community. Along with identifying a selection of outstanding retail businesses and made-in-Wellington-County products, this initiative recommends food and drink destinations to round out the experience and to support local restaurants.

Truly collaborative, staff created this campaign with input from municipal partners and leveraged activities and shop local initiatives created by local BIAs, Chambers, and other organizations from across the County. The campaign is marketed primarily via social media and supported through radio and print ads.



Taste Real Farmers' Market Boxes

Following the success of the Summer Farmers' Market Box Series, staff worked with the eight local markets to curate a [Holiday Farmers' Market Box](#) featuring a selection of foods, beverages, and crafts from local businesses. The Holiday Box enjoyed unprecedented uptake and sold out in just days, prompting markets to double their original allocation of boxes. In total 202 boxes were sold within 10 days resulting in \$15,958 in additional sales for local businesses. The total revenue

received by businesses for this initiative in 2022 is a remarkable \$44,091 with all of it going directly to local businesses.

The International Economic Development Council (IEDC) has selected Wellington County as a recipient of a [2022 Excellence Silver Award for the Taste Real Market Box Series](#) in the Innovation Programmes and Initiatives category. The award honours organizations for exemplary economic development marketing campaigns, projects, and programmes. This recognition follows the provincial Economic Developers Council of Ontario (EDCO) 2021 Award received for the Farmers' Market Box Series earlier this year.

Tourism Strategy Development

Staff are working with Deloitte Ltd on developing a Wellington County Tourism Strategy. Forty tourism businesses and stakeholders from across Wellington County participated in an Industry Stakeholder workshop on October 17 for an opportunity to provide their insights and input into the Strategy. Additional outreach components include 10 tourism stakeholder interviews, two meetings with the Wellington County Economic Development Group, a consultation with the Regional Tourism Organization, Visit Guelph, and Elora Fergus Tourism, as well as a familiarization (FAM) visit. The strategy will be completed in January 2023.

Gin Trail


Ontario's first Gin Trail launched in June of this year featuring six distilleries across Wellington, Waterloo, and Perth Counties. The trail is a collaborative tourism product, developed by representatives of the Regional Tourism Organization 4 (RTO 4), Elora Fergus Tourism, the Elora Distilling Company, and County Economic Development. On October 17, staff facilitated a planning meeting for participating distilleries and tourism partners in Elora to review successes and discuss future plans for the trail.

The trail has quickly gained traction with provincial tourism partners, including Destination Ontario. The Gin Trail Passport has been selected to be displayed at five of their Tourism Information Centres. On November 16 and 17, a writer for the LCBO Food and Drink magazine visited all locations on the trail, exploring this new food tourism experience, with an article expected in Summer 2023.

Fall Rural Romp

The [popular fall event](#) was held on September 24 showcasing 19 farm and food businesses throughout Centre and Southern Wellington County. The self guided tour included farms, farmers' markets, a brewery, a cidery, a distillery, a coffee roastery, a patisserie, and the Bradford Whitcomb Green Legacy Nursery. The event aims to connect locals and visitors with local food businesses and create an outstanding rural tourism experience.

Feedback collected shows visitor numbers varying by type of business and location, averaging at about 80 visitors and sales of up to \$4,000.



Holiday Happenings in Wellington County



Discover Wellington County's many festive season highlights - from outstanding Holiday shopping to Christmas tree farms and local events.

Explore all the exciting holiday happenings for each community.



www.experiencewellington.ca

Spend an October weekend travelling along one of the province's butter tart trails and learning more about this well-loved Ontario treat.

GRAHAM PAINE METROLAND FILE PHOTO

A sweet weekend escape

Discover one of the province's butter tart trails for a fun day of exploring and a very delicious sugar high

KAREN KWAN
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

About this series Wheels wants to inspire you to explore. This series of day trips and longer drives highlight great experiences you can have in the province, and show you why Ontario is "Ours to Discover."

Butter tarts, those delicious, flaky pastries filled with buttery, sugary sweetness that you can find in most supermarkets and country general stores across Ontario, date back to more than a century. In fact, recipes for them can be found in cookbooks dating from the early 1900s.

Ontario's even got a couple of butter-tart trails, including one in Wellington County and a Kawartha-Northumberland version. For the ultimate autumn day trip, we opted to try the closer-to-Toronto trail in Wellington County and explored a handful of its 23 stops.

In the morning Leaving Toronto, head west on Highway 401 before driving north on Highway 410. From there, continue along Highway 10 before turning west onto Highway 24 toward Erin. Make Holtom's Bakery your first stop on your butter-tart experience.

This charming spot has a nostalgic, old-fashioned bakery aesthetic. Its family recipes, with everything baked from scratch, have been passed down for generations. Once you've picked up some of its butter tarts, spend some time exploring Erin.

This quaint town, and the surrounding communities of Guelph and Rockwood, has a picturesque Hallmark-movie vibe — for example, it's not hard to imagine bumping into that old high school flame while visiting the corn mazes at Thatcher Farms Butcher Shop, Bakery & Farm Market or Strom's Farm & Bakery.

Head next to Belwood Country Market in Belwood, about a 30-minute drive west of Erin. This spot is renowned for its butter tarts — it sells upward of 270,000 of them each year — with choices ranging from plain to raisin and pecan.



GEOFF ROBINS METROLAND FILE PHOTO

Be sure to visit the Wellington County Museum and Archives in Fergus to learn more about the history of this part of southwestern Ontario.



Along with a corn maze to explore, you can also pick up a pumpkin for Halloween from Strom's Farm & Bakery in Guelph.

METROLAND FILE PHOTO

There are also several unique flavours, including Skor, Reese's Peanut, white-chocolate blueberry and coconut-raspberry, as well as seasonal options (think dark chocolate cranberry for Christmas and maple bacon around Canada Day).

Around noon Next up, make the short drive to downtown Fergus to visit The Red Door and pick up some gluten-free butter tarts for your friends who can't indulge in the traditional versions. Enter through the red door on the side of the building and be prepared to enjoy a delicious lunch. Its menu has options for everyone, including those on restricted diets, such as its dairy-free soup of the day or its vegetarian portobello mushroom sandwich.

In the afternoon After lunch, head over to the Wellington County Museum and Archives. This National Historic Site operated as a poor house in the late 1800s, providing shelter and a place of work for the homeless and destitute. Now a mu-

seum, it features nine galleries that share the stories of the people and places of Wellington County.

From the museum, head to Gerrie's Garden Centre and Farm Market in nearby Elora. It's the Mennonite-style market you wish you had in your neighbourhood for all of your grocery needs. Add some of their gluten-free tarts to your cart and while you're there, pick up some fall decor for your garden.

If you're feeling the need for some exercise, park the car and explore the Elora Gorge Trails, an easy four-and-a-half-kilometre path that delivers fantastic views of the gorge.

Drive next to the outskirts of Elora to Dar's Country Market where you can score gluten-free butter tarts along with local produce and a selection of gourmet foods. You won't regret picking up some of its juicy barbecue ribs or freshly baked chicken pot pies to enjoy for dinner once you get home.

Next up, stop into The Right Spot Restaurant & Baked Goods in the

Drive guide

- 9 a.m. Leave Toronto
- 10 a.m. Holtom's Bakery
- 11 a.m. Belwood Country Market
- Noon The Red Door
- 1 p.m. Wellington County Museum and Archives
- 2 p.m. Gerrie's Garden Centre and Farm Market
- 3 p.m. Dar's Country Market, The Right Spot and A La Mode
- 4 p.m. Arthur's Murals
- 5 p.m. HomeStyle Flavours

NOTE: TIMES ARE SUGGESTIONS ONLY

For the drive

You'll have plenty to listen to as you explore the Wellington Butter Tart Trail. For the drive out, listen to CBC Radio's "The Butter Tart: Iconic Canadian Treat or Outdated Sweet?" in which foodies debate the dessert's status. And on the way home, check out North Americana Podcast's "An American Foodie Dishes on Ontario's Butter Tart Trail."

town of Alma. This family restaurant sells classic butter tarts (plain, raisin and pecan) but is known for its apple-cinnamon variety. Pastry lovers will also want to pick up a coconut-cream or lemon-meringue pie — customers have been known to drive for hours to enjoy a slice.

Next, drive to Drayton, known for its historic opera house from 1902, to pick up some butter tarts at A La Mode, a cute coffee shop located downtown. After, head north to Arthur, billed as Canada's most patriotic village, is to check out its historical murals, including the Pioneer Mural (which features images of the community's early European settlers) on the side of building that once housed the Arthur Registry Office.

Finally, make your last stop HomeStyle Flavours in the community of Palmerston. This horse and buggy-style business will give you a glimpse into the local Mennonite culture and its traditional baking techniques. If you need a healthy fix to balance all of the sweet baked goods you've been sampling, pick up one of its hefty sandwiches to share on the drive home.

SCAN THIS CODE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT DIFFERENT CORN MAZES IN THE TORONTO AREA



Talent Attraction and Newcomer Support

The division is pleased to welcome Anuradha Dam, who joined the County at the start of November. Anuradha Dam is a professional immigrant, only four years ago she came to Canada and has already visited much of what Wellington County has to offer from a visitor's perspective. With a Masters degree in Business Administration, she has worked with the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council, and most recently as the Business Operations Lead at Openly. Inspired by lessons learned from her own lived experience, she is passionate about helping fellow immigrants blend in. Through her Talent Attraction and Newcomer Support role at the County, Anuradha is committed to making the County of Wellington a welcoming place to work and live for all communities.

Over the month she has contributed greatly to the 3 year Strategic Plan. She also met with member municipal EDOs and Business Centre representatives at an event hosted recently by the Workforce Planning Board. The event, titled Labour Shortages: Working Towards Solutions, also provided the opportunity to meet with a few employers from the region to understand barriers and brainstorm solutions as a group. In December, Anuradha will focus on meeting with member municipal economic development representatives individually. She also has scheduled meetings with the Settlement Services team to discuss regional trends, barriers and how best the County can support newcomers and attract talent.

Keep Well Fund Update

In March 2020, the Keep Well Fund was established by Wellington County Council to support County businesses during the pandemic. The Fund was administered by the two Community Futures Development Corporations (CFDC) serving Wellington County, the Wellington Waterloo Community Futures and the Saugeen Economic Development Corporation. In total, \$891,400 in funding was distributed through the Keep Well Fund by the end of April 2020. This supported 290 jobs and provided 60 loans with an average loan amount of \$15,108. Businesses were thankful for the quick response and support provided through the CFDCs.

The County has become an example for other municipalities working with CFDCs. Other items of note are that the Wellington Waterloo Community Futures considers only one of the 60 loans as bad debt, all loans are current, and five have already paid in full.

Together the organizations have been repaid 50% and are expecting to fully recover the investment in the next two years, plus \$20,000 in interest. An update on the status of the Fund is below.

Waterloo Wellington Community Futures	
Loan Advanced	\$ 740,400.00
Principal Paid 2020	(32,042.47)
	\$ 708,357.53
Principal Paid 2021	(146,311.12)
	\$ 562,046.41
Principal Paid YTD 2022	(128,522.23)
Loan Principal Balance at September 30, 2022	\$ 433,524.18
Saugeen Community Futures	
Loan Advanced	\$ 151,000.00
Principal Paid 2021	(52,438.62)
	\$ 98,561.38
Principal Paid YTD 2022	(18,359.08)
Loan Principal Balance at September 30, 2022	\$ 80,202.30
Total Keep Well Loan Outstanding at Sept 30, 2022	\$ 513,726.48

Attainable Housing

The County Attainable Housing portfolio consists of a public awareness campaign, a CIP review to encourage more rentals, and municipal conversations to support local efforts. This portfolio was defined by the County Attainable Housing Taskforce in 2021 and includes senior staff and elected officials. The Taskforce met earlier this month to receive an update on the project, and decided to pause on the next meeting until further information is received concerning Bill 23.

The public awareness campaign ran through November on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. This was a reiteration of the importance of discussing housing options in the communities, and the real-life impact to the economy, volunteerism, community, and culture. Additional stories are being collected, including successes with additional residential units.

In the new year, staff will be working with member municipalities to facilitate public information sessions which augment an existing municipal economic development related event. Staff are also considering incorporating a speaker, to discuss what higher density developments can look like, and how yimbyism can be encouraged.

In person consultations began in September, have been by County Planning and Economic Development, and included Centre Wellington and most recently Wellington North. An update on these discussions and the campaign will be provided at the next Taskforce meeting.

Three Year Plan

Staff sincerely look forward to presenting the 2023 to 2026 County Economic Development Plan for Committee review. A great deal of time, energy and thought has gone into preparing the Plan,

which was developed completely in-house, and in consultation with our member municipalities and strategic partners.

Other Activities

- OMAFRA will host Community Economic Development workshops February-March 2023, staff have offered the WCMA as a host site.
- Taste Real Newsletters sent: November 10
- Experience Wellington Newsletters sent: October 7, November 18
- 17 businesses joined the Taste Real programme in 2022
- Toque Magazine Feature: Majestic Water Buffalo, Erin, and a curated list of 'Top 10 Rural Bakeries worth a Trip'
- Christina was interviewed by the Toronto Star about [Butter Tart Experiences in Wellington County](#)
- Taste Real Display at the Fergus Fall Fair on September 16 – 18 and the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO) conference on October 25 and 26
- Corporate visit at Cox Creek Winery on November 9
- 58 enquiries received total: Taste Real (25), Ride Well (15), Business Directory (5), General (4), Tourism (4), BR+E (2), CIP (2), Talent Attraction (1)
- Business e-newsletter sent September 9; October 18; November 8

Recommendation:

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

Respectfully submitted,



Jana Burns
Wellington Place Administrator