



# COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

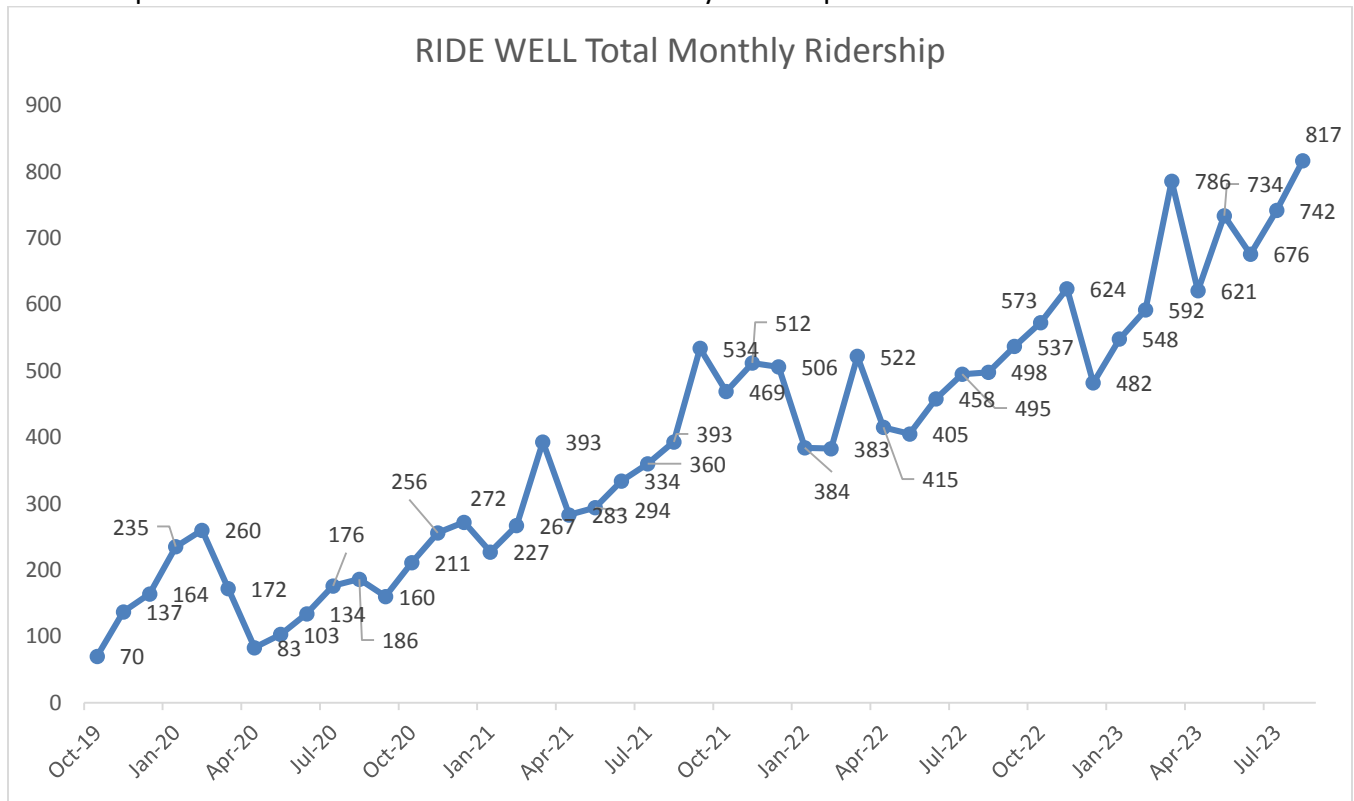
## Committee Report

**To:** Chair and Members of the Economic Development Committee  
**From:** Christina Mann, Manager of Economic Development  
**Date:** Tuesday, September 19, 2023  
**Subject:** Economic Development Report

### Background:

#### Ride Well

Ride Well continued its growth through the summer, reaching a new high. The growth was supported by the increase of vehicle hours from 30 to 38 hours per day, which took full effect in July 2023. In August, Ride Well had its highest monthly total ridership recorded since the service launched, with 817 rides completed. The below chart shows total monthly ridership since launch:



With more available vehicle hours, daily rides increased from 31 rides per day in June to 37 in August. The following table tracks key performance metrics over the last quarter:

Month	Rides/Bookings	Passengers/Seats	Unique users	New users	Average rides per user	Average rides per day	New accounts registered
June 2023	676	726	120	23	5.6	31	74
July 2023	742	793	109	20	6.8	35	79
August 2023	817	865	135	29	6.1	37	73

## Community Transportation Requests for Additional Funding

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) has additional funding available for Community Transportation Grant Recipients to complete their pilot projects by March 2025. Staff will be applying for additional funding for the Ride Well Pilot.

## Community Improvement Programme

Two new CIP projects were approved for funding over the summer.

1. Kat Florence of Elora has been approved for \$10,000 through the Invest MORE grant to complete a mixed-use building renovation and conversion. The property is home to the Gorge Cinema on the lower floors, and currently has vacant residential units above. Through this project, these units will be renovated, and four new apartments will be added to the downtown Elora inventory.
2. Tullamore Lavender Co. located in Mapleton Township has been approved for \$7,500 through the Invest MORE grant to start the second phase of their on-farm diversified agricultural use project. This will include converting the property into a tourism experience with landscaped paths and seating areas throughout the fields. Additional gardens will be built to contribute to beautification of the property and to improve the overall experience.

## Taste Real and Experience Wellington

### Fall Rural Romp

Taste Real's [Fall Rural Romp](#) returns to Southern Wellington County on Saturday, September 30. 22 locations open their doors to welcome visitors in Centre Wellington, Erin, Guelph/Eramosa, Puslinch, and the City of Guelph. The event aims to educate about local food and agriculture, build valuable business to consumer connections, and increase the awareness of rural businesses. The Rural Romp further showcases Wellington County as a premier destination for agri-food experiences.



### Feast On the Farm

The Culinary Tourism Alliance's [Feast On® the Farm: Wellington County](#) will take place at Thatcher Farms in Guelph/Eramosa on Sunday, October 1. The local food dining event is presented in partnership with Wellington County and features three local chefs, local purveyors, and beverage providers. Event sales directly support a hospitality sector [Industry Education Day](#) held at the same venue on Monday, October 2. Staff have partnered with Visit Guelph to offer a two-night accommodation package to encourage extended stays and visitor spending locally.



## Farmers' Markets

The farmers' market box series will wrap up at the end of September with the last box delivery taking place on September 26. Box sales have been strong, and the initiative has been well received by the public and vendors. The public had the opportunity to donate to Social Services' Farmers' Market Bucks programme when purchasing a market box. To date, \$905 have been raised to directly support the food access programme.

## Regional Promotion

Staff continue to promote Wellington County as a destination through marketing initiatives and seasonal opportunities.

The '[Top 5 Things To Do In Wellington County This Week](#)' series promotes local events and experiences.

Staff collaborated with the Friends of the Grand River, the Regional Tourism Organization 4, and Elora Fergus Tourism to bring a well-known fishing TV show to the County. The '[New Fly Fisher](#)' features angling destinations across the world and has a significant following within North America. Staff were invited to share local knowledge and recommend additional visitor experiences on camera. Staff further facilitated filming at local businesses and destinations to be highlighted as part of the show.

Additional marketing highlights and seasonal features include:

- Wellington County tourism website [www.experiencewellington.ca](http://www.experiencewellington.ca) featured on Hillside Festival's weekend wristbands.
- Free partnership with Boreal Farm to distribute over 8,000 Taste Real print materials at Canadian National Exhibition (CNE).
- Local Food Map and Experience Wellington ads in local publications such as the Rural Route magazine and Erin Fall Fair guide.
- Taste Real booth at Rockwood Party in the Park event.
- Developed a new 'Best Ice Cream Destinations in Wellington County' page to encourage day trips.
- Food Day Canada events and Farmers' Market recipes.
- Seasonal social media marketing showcasing summer experience videos, seasonal food offerings and outings, such as berry picking, sweet corn, frozen treats, and picnics.

## Downtown Revitalization

In collaboration with Wellington-Waterloo Community Futures (WWCF), the Economic Development Division was successful in obtaining a Rural Economic Development (RED) grant to support downtown revitalization efforts across the County. Deliverables include building an updated photo library of Wellington County's downtowns and businesses, the creation of a Discover Downtown marketing campaign, and supporting specific priorities outlined by member municipalities.



## Cycling Tourism

Staff continue to work with Ontario by Bike, municipal stakeholders, and local cyclists to develop suggested cycling itineraries for Wellington County. Seven draft cycling routes are currently under review by County and municipal staff and will be tested before the final recommendations are released. The cycling itineraries include a variety of destinations and businesses across Wellington County, including a selection of rural farm and food businesses.

## Wellington County Data Dashboard

Staff have developed a [new landing page](#) for economic data for Wellington County, using Manifold Data Mining. The updated dashboard provides more accurate and updated information for Wellington County and each of its seven member municipalities pertaining to a variety of economic factors, including demographics, labour force, income, housing, and more. The dashboard is widely used by member municipalities, agencies, and a helpful tool for site selectors.

## Student Start-Up Programme

[Saugeen Connects](#), a partnership between Saugeen Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) and seven rural municipalities in Wellington, Grey, and Bruce Counties ran a successful Saugeen Student Start-Up Programme (SSUP) this summer. This is the programme's fourth year running, and it has helped over 147 students gain entrepreneurial experience by providing start-up funding and valuable training opportunities to try entrepreneurship. A \$2,000 contribution through the County's Economic Development budget directly supported the participation of 33 youth from Minto and Wellington North.



## Talent Attraction

### Wellington Welcomes

The [Wellington Welcomes](#) social media campaign launched in July on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter. Four out of 13 stories from local residents sharing their newcomer experience have been published so far. The initial reception, as indicated by reactions and comments, has been remarkably positive and overwhelmingly heartwarming. Preliminary results show excellent organic engagement across social media platforms, with the first three stories reaching over 16,539 users on Facebook.



The small-town charm, beautiful trails, fresh air, open green spaces and especially the Grand River running through Fergus makes this a wonderful place to call home.

– Mohammad Haque

#wellingtonwelcomes



The community in Harriston is very warm and welcoming. The hospital I visit has a friendly environment - they have Arabic translators which makes conversations easy.

– Nidal Almohamad

#wellingtonwelcomes

## Wellington County Multicultural Festival

The County's first ever [Multicultural Festival](#) is set to engage the community in a full day of cultural festivities and cuisine from around the world. The event aims to increase cross-cultural engagement and create space to celebrate the charm of different cultures and customs within our community. The one-day, free, family friendly festival will feature a diverse lineup of cultural performances such as China's Fut Shan lion dance, Scottish bagpipes, Caribbean Soca dance, Celtic dance, Syrian Dabke dance, Kuchipudi and Garba traditional dance of India amongst others.

Festivities will extend beyond the stage and food stalls to include a community art project "Flags for Healing the Planet" by artist Indra Dosanjh and residents of the Township of Centre Wellington. Other free live activities will include Henna tattoo, face painting, storytelling, and a bubble show to encourage a mix of education, engagement, and entertainment.

New Canadians TV, a prominent programme aired on OMNI TV, will be covering the upcoming Multicultural Festival. This collaboration holds immense potential, as it offers opportunity to shine a spotlight on our region. By partnering with New Canadians TV, we can effectively reach out to and engage with immigrant and newcomer communities globally.



CULTURAL PERFORMANCES · FOOD · MUSIC · KIDS ACTIVITIES · AND MORE!



## Other Activities:

- Staff met with the Caribbean Canadian Association of Waterloo Region on July 12 to learn about LiftOff, a Black Entrepreneurship programme supporting black entrepreneurs across Waterloo and Wellington County.
- Staff participated in multiple media interviews pertaining to the Ride Well Service expansion, Food Day Canada, and the Multicultural Festival.
- Staff prepared and presented information for the Standard and Poor's Credit Review on August 9. Please find a copy of the presentation attached.
- Staff participated in an employer roundtable discussion at a United Way Waterloo Region event centered around collaborating with newcomers to Canada in on August 30.

- The Wellington County Economic Development Group meeting was held at 3 Gen Organics in Mapleton on September 12. See minutes attached.
- Experience Wellington newsletter sent June 23, July 21, August 18.
- In Business News newsletter sent July 26.
- Taste Real newsletter sent July 28, September 8.
- Over 200 enquiries from June 19 to September 11 including: Ride Well (65), Farmers' Market Initiatives (36), Brochures (20), General (12), Fall Rural Romp (10), Events/Support (9), Business Directory (8), Land (6), Taste Real (6), Business Support (5), Smart Cities (5), Marketing (4), Internet (3), Multicultural Festival (3), Festivals and Events (2), Housing (2), Newsletter (2), Newcomer Success Stories (1), Signage (1), Talent Attraction (1), Tourism (1), and Website (1).

## **Attachments**

- County of Wellington Credit Review Presentation 2023
- Wellington County Economic Development Group Meeting Minutes – September 2023

## **Recommendation:**

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

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christina", written in a cursive style.

Christina Mann  
Manager of Economic Development