

FORUM DISCUSSION NOTES
RURAL TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS



JUNE 20, 2014
ORANGEVILLE, ONTARIO

For contributing to the success of this forum, thank you to Omar Yassin Omar, Program Manager, Waterloo-Wellington-Dufferin, Ontario Trillium Foundation; Shakiba Shayani, Community Investment Manager, United Way Guelph-Wellington-Dufferin; Tasneem Essaji, Manager, Municipal Transit Policy Office, Ministry of Transportation; and Brad Smith, Manager, Ride Norfolk; and all of our partners in the *Accelerating Rural Transportation Solutions* Project.

ACCELERATING RURAL TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS



The Rural Ontario Institute gratefully acknowledges funding support for this project provided by the Government of Ontario.



FORUM DESCRIPTION

The Rural Ontario Institute, in partnership with Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition and Headwaters Communities in Action, hosted a half-day forum in Orangeville, Ontario on June 20, 2014 to explore rural transportation solutions.

In total, 55 stakeholders from across the region participated in the forum, which included representatives from regional municipalities, health and social service providers, and provincial ministry staff (for a complete list of organizations represented, see APPENDIX I). The following notes were captured during four concurrent small group discussions among the participants.

TABLE DISCUSSION NOTES

GROUP #1– PROVINCIAL LEVEL DISCUSSION

Q1. What question, if answered, could make the most difference to the future of rural transportation in your community?

- Opportunities for “private” organizations to collaborate to address gaps in service
- Identifying organizations
- Looking for opportunities
- How will we use technology in a transportation system (ie driverless cars)?
- Political will/funding
- Social equity

Q2. Based on the information presented here today, what are you hearing that's at the centre of rural transportation solutions?

- Consistent funding \$\$
- Collaboration to use existing financial resources
- Who needs to be served? Now and in 10/20 years
- Recognize there is a need
- Projecting trends
- Post baby boom?
- What's the link between youth out-migration and transportation?

Q3. What can we do together that we can't do by working alone? Then, how can we support each other in taking the next steps?

- Understand current level of service and what are gaps alone → same services
- Share resources – physical, brain power, technology
- Share best practices
- Expand gas tax \$
- Lower cost
- Share clients
- Support with website: Who has buses/drivers and coordinate routes, Share best practices/ideas, community of practice/network
- Central referring service e.g. 211
- Trust/relationship building especially when giving up \$/responsibility
- Need for a lead agency to coordinate and keep moving

Q4. If there was one thing that hasn't yet been said in order to reach a deeper level of understanding/clarity on these issues today, what would that be?

- What are the benefits to the community of the rural transportation?
Social/Employment/health?
- Need to monetize, including the opportunity cost
- Youth, employment, buy local
- Change mind set on subsidies—especially cars—manufacturing companies, infrastructure etc.
- Political will needs money to buy in – where is public vs. private responsibility
- Ability to “sell” to create political will/support
- Monetize the benefit
- Identifying existing service gaps

GROUP 2 - SIMCOE /YORK COUNTY DISCUSSION

Q1. What question, if answered, could make the most difference to the future of rural transportation in your community?

- What exists now?
- Routes Connecting Communities & CHATS – on the east side of Lake Simcoe
- Retirement homes (private and County)

- Simcoe County Van
- Community Living
- Canadian Cancer Society
- Town of New Tecumseth subsidizes taxis for seniors and disabled
- How can we get sustainable and consistent funding?

Q2. Based on the information presented here today, what are you hearing that's at the centre of rural transportation solutions?

- Need money/sustainable funding guaranteed
- Coordination
- Need to know what exists and needs/gap – start with what you have already
- Coordinator – may evolve over time – who/what/how
- Municipality needed to access gas tax
- Need new attitude to transportation overall – just because rural does not mean no sidewalks, public transit etc.

Q3. What can we do together that we can't do by working alone? Then, how can we support each other in taking the next steps?

- Coordination: CUTA/OPTA for rural areas
- Advocate province/feds (+municipalities)
- Time to raise hell!
- BC transit very progressive and all governed/ funded by province (busses, ferries, rail) - Why not Ontario?
- Need more ownership at all/other levels
- All party committee at provincial level

Q4. If there was one thing that hasn't yet been said in order to reach a deeper level of understanding/clarity on these issues today, what would that be?

- Funding/policies/information
- Provincial government "support"
- Clarity around the gas tax need – ambiguous now
- Links to larger urban areas e.g. To access GO Transit start with - how to get there

- Opportunities to make “active” transportation links - bike rack, lanes, trails sidewalks
- Inter-urban (town to town such as Alliston to Toronto)
- European models good to look at – hub and spoke etc.
- Simcoe County bigger than some provinces in country
- Shop local vs. large centres
- Coordination of systems/options – timing and schedules (sometimes can go “out” but not get back “in” (home!))
- Mind/mode – shift “lane” (i.e. from cars to public transit)
- Social Marketing

GROUP 3 – DUFFERIN COUNTY ‘A’

Q1. What question, if answered, could make the most difference to the future of rural transportation in your community?

- Where is the \$\$ coming from – sources of funding?
- Can we support an expanded county-wide system with ridership funds?
- How do we communicate the options?

Q2. Based on the information presented here today, what are you hearing that's at the centre of rural transportation solutions?

- Collaboration
- Connectivity
- Ridership identification
- Funding
- County Council
- Innovation

Q3. What can we do together that we can't do by working alone? Then, how can we support each other in taking the next steps?

- Bringing resources together
- Coordination and connection ex: dispatch system
- Think like a business
- Connection with larger employers

Q4. If there was one thing that hasn't yet been said in order to reach a deeper level of understanding/clarity on these issues today, what would that be?

- Raising awareness
- Willingness to come to the table

GROUP 4 – DUFFERIN COUNTY ‘B’

Q1. What question, if answered, could make the most difference to the future of rural transportation in your community?

- What is the ridership (need for these services)
- Capacity and Cost
 - Where are we in the process relative to the steps presented in the lectures we have heard this morning
 - We have a process outlined
 - Where is the data to identify where we stand
- Where is our bridge out of poverty? People can't afford transportation
- We have the ridership – people are using shared transportation services
 - Where is the coordination of the different services?
- How do we better communicate the services that are out there ex: LHIN funded van, layers of communication, central coordination
- Transportation is not just a health issue (doctor visits etc.) - What are the needs?
- How do we break down silos between service providers
- Mismatch of providers
 - Are they charging a fee? Why are we not getting a gas tax?
 - Partly because we're not coordinated – need to restructure who collects the fare and who contributes funds to the services

Q2. Based on the information presented here today, what are you hearing that's at the centre of rural transportation solutions?

- Access to gas tax
 - We are not coordinated from a central point
 - There has to be a champion/leader
 - This could be the county or some external agency
 - Need an agency putting their neck out (County)
 - Community services vs. Community support services

- We need a well-publicized list of what we have
- We don't have a plan
- We need municipality, county, support services all at the table
- Every community in County needs to be mandated to sit at the table
 - Already have working groups around waste for example
- Community Development – take the lead
 - Phrase it as “building community capacity”
- Private public partnership

Q3. What can we do together that we can't do by working alone? Then, how can we support each other in taking the next steps?

- Coordinate linkages
 - Shelburne → Orangeville → Brampton
- Town of Shelburne is willing but need the ducks in a row
- Mandate participation?
 - All Dufferin municipalities need to be involved
 - No one here (at the transportation forum) from Orangeville
 - If a municipality says no, it shouldn't stop us all
- Overarching body that qualifies for gas tax
- Identify the true need in all communities – health vs. commuting vs. access to services?
 - Some municipalities have very different needs
 - identify how each can contribute
- Dufferin.biz – “we've offered to help with market research”
 - We need to talk to people – will you ride the bus?
 - Understand our different customers
 - Pull data together to identify our market

Q4. If there was one thing that hasn't yet been said in order to reach a deeper level of understanding/clarity on these issues today, what would that be?

- Keep It Simple Stupid (KISS)
- Employment and medical

- Start with something simple to start
- Get the gas tax process started
- Affordability
 - If you build it will they come?
 - Have to demonstrate need
 - Accessible with people waiting
 - Internal cost recovery? Or transfer costs to rider?
- Don't try to be all things to all people
 - Start small
 - Start with health? It has an established system in place

GROUP 5 – WELLINGTON COUNTY

Q1. What question, if answered, could make the most difference to the future of rural transportation in your community?

- From business development perspective
 - On a given route, what would the demand/ridership be? And for what purpose?
- Ridership low because service wasn't designed to run at the "right" time = Chicken egg problem
- How much is the lack of transportation costing the community?
 - E.g. losing employers
- How much is being spent now on services?
- Profitability?
 - Apps for ride sharing
 - Social enterprise
- H.P. Task force
 - Have to be creative
 - Using existing resources
 - Ride sharing app
 - Carpooling
- Validation of ride providers
 - How? Social media
- Issue with agencies having limited clients

- Need to deal with stigma e.g. “the short bus”
- More social life if we had more transportation options
 - BIAs/bars/\$
 - E.g. Fergus games
 - ½ price youth taxi after midnight
- Creative use of indie gogo
- Known location for ride sharing
 - Inter-community
 - Van Island
 - Harvey’s on Docarie in Montreal

Q4. If there was one thing that hasn’t yet been said in order to reach a deeper level of understanding/clarity on these issues today, what would that be?

- Public education
 - This isn’t about charity
- Collaboration with private sector
 - Engagement in design as partners not just funders
- Too much branding/ ownership by one organization can be a problem
 - E.g. “citibike”
- Well out commuters is significant
 - 54K labour force
 - 38-40 jobs
 - Skill sets not available
- Huron Perth task force
 - GIS to display service providers

APPENDIX I – ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTED AT THE FORUM

Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition
Rural Ontario Institute
Dillon Consulting
Ride Norfolk
Ministry of Transportation
Grey County
Ontario Trillium Foundation, Guelph-Wellington-Dufferin
Municipality of Chatham-Kent
Dufferin Child and Family Services
District of Muskoka
Dufferin County
Town of Orangeville
Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, Orangeville
Georgian College
East Wellington Community Services
Headwaters Communities in Action
Municipality of Centre Wellington
Town of New Tecumseth
Guelph Eramosa Township
SHS Consulting Inc.
Municipality of Peterborough
Municipality of Wellington North
Dufferin Biz
Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health
Mulmur Township
Wellington County
United Way of Perth Huron
Routes Connecting Communities