District of Muskoka
Five-year Transportation Needs Assessment and Sustainability and Growth Plan – Study Update and Service Delivery Options
Presentation Overview

- Project overview
- Existing public transportation services in the District of Muskoka
- Round 1 community engagement
- Community priorities
- Public transportation concepts evaluated
- Proposed service concepts
- Round 2 community engagement
- Next steps
Project Overview
Study Scope

Individual Transportation Solutions

- East-west Connectivity
- Seamless Transportation Network
- Accessible Rural Transportation
- Expansion of Corridor 11 Bus

Long Term Growth and Financial Sustainability
Community Transportation Grant funding period spans 4 years, 2019-2023, and includes funding for:

- Local Community Transportation: $390,000 to move people east-west within Muskoka
- Inter-Community Transportation: $283,000 primarily for operational funding for existing Corridor 11 Bus

To ensure funding is spent efficiently, hired TCN to assess transportation needs and challenges and recommend solutions.

Determine next steps/ implementation plan

To determine sustainability of plan beyond 2023
District of Muskoka Transportation Options
Vehicle Transportation Options Within District

- Corridor 11 Bus – Inter-community Transit
- Local Community Bus Transit – Huntsville Transit and Bracebridge Transit
- Specialized Transit – Huntsville Conventional Modified Transit, Bracebridge Mobility
- Ontario Northland Transportation – Inter-city
- Volunteer Services - Red Cross and Muskoka Seniors
- Taxi industry
- Private vehicles
- Hitch hiking
Corridor 11 Bus Service
- Weekday only
- Huntsville to Barrie via Orillia: morning and late afternoon roundtrips
- Huntsville to Gravenhurst: mid-day roundtrip

MET Service (discontinued pilot)
- School bus in off-peak
- Alternated service areas by day of week
- Cancelled due to low demand

Simcoe Linx
- Orillia – Barrie (current)
- Orillia – Midland (2020)
- Orillia – Washago (long-term)

Ontario Northland
- Highway 11 (North Bay – Toronto)
- Highway 400 (Sudbury – Toronto)
“...I have elder parents and if they lose the use of a car it would be great that they have options other than taxi to get around.”

“...when home you feel trapped and people without a car are unable to get anywhere. I wasn’t able to work as a teenager without my dad driving me...”

“Transportation is a major barrier in Muskoka. I have clients that cannot work due to no transportation and taxis out of town are expensive.”

“More reliability, more often and in the outsides of town. Many of our families and people are isolated due to poor bus service.”

“As I age, I fear not being able to drive. At present I do not like driving in stormy conditions. I don’t know what the solution is for people that are not in the urban area other than driving.”

“I would like to have some kind of transportation here so I can do things without asking friends for a ride and do them by myself.”

Round 1 Community Engagement
Public Transportation Priorities

Emerging from results of all Community Engagement activities:

- Stronger links within and beyond District of Muskoka
- Rural transportation service should be more flexible than previous MET service
- Use of accessible vehicles to ensure accessibility across the transportation network is preferred
- Makes sense to terminate Corridor 11 Bus in Orillia versus Barrie
- SW Muskoka connection to Midland and Orillia, remainder of District with connections to towns served by Corridor 11 Bus
- Using public transit to reduce demand on volunteer-based services
- Enhanced branding and marketing of all public transportation services available
- Consideration given to one District of Muskoka Transit agency that would assume responsibility for Long-distance and Local Transit/ Specialized Transit services District-wide, including Bracebridge and Huntsville
Public Transportation Service Concepts
Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges
- Large geographic area
- Dispersed low-density population separated by lakes and hilly topography
- Aging population and desire to age-in-place
- Employers have difficulty accessing and attracting employees
- Limited access to broadband for some residents
- Limited resources – can’t address all needs of all market segments

Opportunities
- Resident expectations are modest
- Connecting local community transportation with existing Corridor 11 Bus
- Mobile apps are now more commonplace
- Potential demand from some clients of volunteer transportation services to use Corridor 11 Bus as well new rural east-west service
- Can address several needs with a coordinated solution
- Strong community support/involvement
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transportation Concept</th>
<th>Recommend?</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heavy-duty conventional transit</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>42-seat capacity for much larger urban centres, much higher costs than</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>alternatives; less route flexibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fixed-route community bus service</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Dependable, timed connections to other systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fixed flex-route community bus service</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>More flexible than fixed route, can deviate to improve accessibility,</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>serving more customers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fixed-route shared-ride taxi</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Alternative to community bus, if more cost-effective; requires additional</td>
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<td>service agreement</td>
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<td>Fully on-demand services (dial-a-ride, Uber)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Relatively low efficiency compared to fixed flex-route</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>High cost of Uber for both customers and District</td>
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<td>Mobile apps</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Can be incorporated into various transportation services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specialized transit</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Most specialized transit customers can be accommodated by fixed flex-route</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>community bus rather than separate vehicle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Car share program</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Not applicable. Private sector initiative associated with large densely</td>
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<td>populated cities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteer driver program</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Continue to work with other agencies</td>
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Preferred Transit Service Concepts

- Terminate Corridor 11 Bus in Orillia (removes duplication of Simcoe LINX service to Barrie)
  - Decreased cost
  - Reallocate to enhance service between Gravenhurst and Bracebridge and, possibly, Huntsville
  - Or reallocate to enhance Local community bus service
- Fixed Flex-route (Each Once Weekly):
  - Route A: Mactier – Bracebridge – Baysville – Huntsville
  - Route B Option 1: Honey Harbour – Port Severn - Waubaushene – Midland
  - Route B Option 2: Bracebridge – Bala – Honey Harbour – Port Severn - Waubaushene – Midland
- Approximate hours available with existing community transportation grants
  - Local: up to 1,000 hours per year, 20 hours per week, 4 hours per weekday
  - Long-distance (C11): up to 2,600 hours per year, 50 hours per week, 10 hours per weekday
- Estimated demand: starting out 2 pass. per hour and increase to 4.0 pass. per hour by 2023
Fixed Flex-Route Concept

**Advantages**
- Sufficient schedule predictability
- Improved accessibility and reach
- Reduced need to connect with existing local Transit services
- Timed to connect with Corridor 11 Bus for ease of transfers
- Over time, fixed-route can be modified to reduce deviation requests

**Disadvantages**
- Is not as tailored as other on-demand services
- Some residents are too far off route to be serviced
Corridor 11 Bus Enhancements

- Terminate in Orillia (passengers can transfer to Simcoe LINX bus to Barrie)
- Saves ~$20,000 annually to offset any revenue shortfall; or
- Two alternative options to enhance service as follows:
  - Option 1: Three round trips between Huntsville and Orillia every weekday
    - Most consistent, makes it easier to coordinate connections with other services
  - Option 2: Increase short-turn bus from one to two trips between Huntsville and Gravenhurst
    - Additional trips are on the busiest part of the route
- Add stops en route in Huntsville and Gravenhurst
- Stops added to coordinate with Ontario Northland
- Enhance marketing to advertise service as alternating with Ontario Northland
Proposed Route A

- Fixed flex-route one day per week
- Mactier to Huntsville via Bracebridge and Baysville
- Route deviations upon request
- Connects with Corridor 11 Bus to Orillia
- Two round trips per day once weekly
  - = 10 hours per weekday
- Use bus similar to Corridor 11 Bus
- Costs roughly $29,000 annually
Proposed Route B Option 1

- Fixed flex-route
- Honey Harbour to Midland
- Route deviations upon request
- Connects with LINX bus to Orillia
- Two round trips once per week
  - ~5 hours per day
- Use bus similar to Corridor 11 Bus or contract to taxi operator
- Connects Midland residents to SW Muskoka tourist area
- Costs approx. $20,000 annually
Proposed Route B Option 2

- Fixed flex-route one day per week
- Gravenhurst to Midland via Port Severn, Honey Harbour, Bala
- Route deviations, including Bracebridge upon request
- Connects with LINX bus to Orillia
- Two round trips per day
  - 10 hours per weekday
- Use bus similar to Corridor 11 Bus
- More direct service between Midland and most Muskoka communities
- Costs roughly $29,000 annually
Full Network: Route A + Route B Option 1
Full Network: Route A + Route B Option 2
East-West Enhancements

- Improve service hours (8 to 10 hours instead of 4 provides additional flexibility)
- Flex routing (with potential use of mobile app) extends coverage to bring more residents in closer proximity to the service - addresses individual needs
- Larger branded vehicle provides more legitimacy to the service
- Accessible vehicle provides more options for residents
- Additional connections to Bracebridge from Honey Harbour and Port Severn
- Future connection to LINX Bus between Midland and Orillia
Summary of Route and Service Concepts

- Addresses community priorities and consensus
- Does not serve all of Muskoka; however, it is recommended to provide a higher level of service to most versus very little service to all
- Builds on the most successful former MET routes
  - SW Muskoka to Midland (with potential to connect to Gravenhurst/ Bracebridge)
  - Baysville to Huntsville (with added connection to Bracebridge)
- Dependable schedules will help grow transit ridership
- Accessible vehicles
- Flexible – addresses needs of individuals
  - On-demand – call or use app
  - Deviates off route for up to 5 minutes
- On-Demand service to serve entire District can be explored at a future date, upon assessment of local bus route pilot program
Other Recommendations

- Maintain existing Corridor 11 Bus fares
- Zone fares for Local bus service ($5 zones up to 3 zones)
- Secure mobile app for flex-route service yet accommodate phone requests
- Use of smart card technology to build on Bracebridge Transit and Simcoe LINC
- Downtown bus stops common between Ontario Northland, Corridor 11 Bus and Local Bus services
- One service provider suggested for pilot program duration
- Work with industry to support reliable employee shuttles
- Investigate potential regional approach to public transportation, including governance (single District agency versus three (one District + two Municipal))
Meeting Project Objectives

1. Individual Transportation Solutions
   - Flexing of routes for demand-response
   - Mobile apps

2. Accessible Rural Transportation Solutions
   - Accessible vehicles

3. Provision of East-West Connectivity
   - East and west rural service connects to Corridor 11 in Bracebridge
   - Added bonus of connectivity to Simcoe LINX

4. Expansion of the Inter-Community Corridor 11 Bus
   - Added Gravenhurst – Bracebridge service
   - ONTC service recognition (Novar, Port Sydney)

5. Seamless Transportation Networks in Muskoka
   - Common bus stops and improve connectivity
   - Fare integration

6. Long-Term Growth and Financial Sustainability
   - Partnerships with agencies and industry
   - Maximize gas tax $ to minimize local $
   - Regional approach to public transportation
Round 2 Community Engagement Feedback
TFG Feedback on Route & Service Concepts

To be provided verbally
Summary

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Next Steps

- Incorporate feedback received from Transit Focus Group Follow-Up Session and Community and Planning Services Committee
- Final recommendations and budget
- Final report by late spring
Questions?