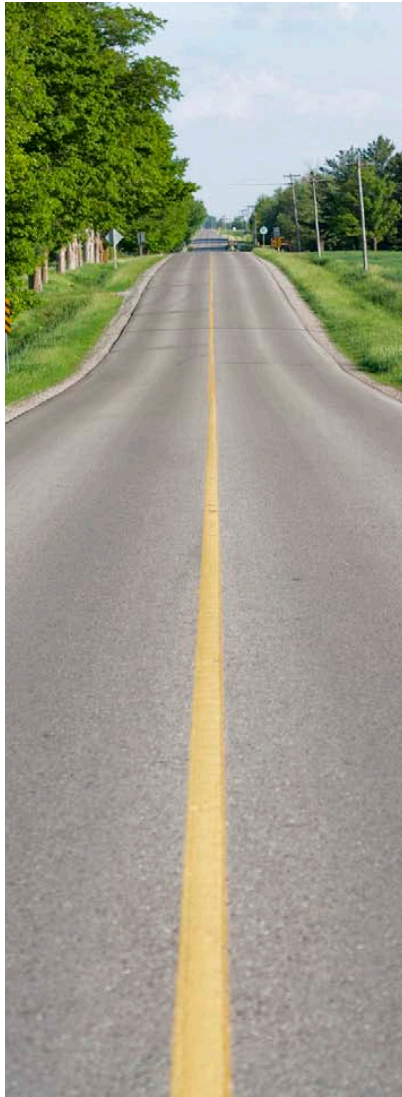


# ACCELERATING RURAL TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS



## Project Overview

The Rural Ontario Institute and the Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition are collaborating on a project to share knowledge of effective models and emerging innovation in rural regional transportation. “Accelerating Rural Transportation Solutions”, funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation, aims to:

- identify and document case studies of effective rural regional transportation approaches in Ontario;
- implement and report on a study of the current and potential business models and financing sources for cost-shared rural transportation systems; and
- communicate and facilitate dialogue to share the above resources at events and through learning channels, including workshops, webinars and forums.

This project was started in November, 2013 and is expected to be completed by July 31, 2014. This paper provides an interim summary of the project activities to date.

## Why Now?

Rural and northern stakeholders have been voicing concerns about transportation challenges for a long time. This is a persistent issue and the solutions will almost certainly require many organizations to work together to support new approaches. Given the aging demographic found in rural places, the assumption that social, economic and health needs can be met solely by private cars and volunteer programs is increasingly untenable. Rural youth unemployment and access to educational and skills training programs are pressing issues in many rural communities. If rural places are to sustain a high quality regional labour force, lower income segments of the population need to be mobile and able to get to work in adjacent communities.

However, recent developments are leading to a more optimistic perspective. Ontario models of collaborative rural transportation solutions are emerging and continuing to evolve. This project is enabling leaders of those programs to share their stories and engage in a cross-sector dialogue with rural stakeholders. Strong interest has been demonstrated in developing solutions to this issue from diverse perspectives, including community economic development stakeholders, health and social service agencies and municipal organizations. Bringing these perspectives together will strengthen and accelerate the development of solutions to rural transportation issues.

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## Project Engagement

A number of organizations expressed formal support for this initiative before the proposal was approved for funding, including: the Ontario Good Roads Association, Oxford United Way, Ride Norfolk, South Central Ontario Region, Headwaters Communities in Action – Transportation Learning Group, and the Rural Ontario Municipal Association. Some of these organizations have representation on the Project Management Committee. Others have more recently come forward to show their support and willingness to join an Advisory Group, to ensure the project connects with key stakeholders. The Advisory Committee includes representatives from the Ministry of Transportation, Ontario Public Transit Association, United Ways of Ontario, South Western Economic Assembly, Monieson Centre at Queen’s University, and Huron-Perth United Way. Other municipalities and organizations have become engaged in the project by participating in the business feasibility study, by contributing to the case studies research, or by co-hosting workshops and forums.

## Accelerating Rural Transportation Solutions Webinar Series

Several program leaders of rural transportation initiatives within Ontario were willing to share stories of their success through a webinar series, offered in partnership with HC Link. Three webinars were hosted during February and March, 2014. Recordings of the webinars, presentation slides and related documents are available at: [www.ohcc-ccso.ca/en/rural\\_transportation\\_webinars](http://www.ohcc-ccso.ca/en/rural_transportation_webinars).

### Part 1: Framing the issues, identifying the challenges, and exploring the opportunities

The first webinar in the series provided an overview of the issues, along with some of the challenges and opportunities that exist with setting up and running a rural transportation initiative.

#### Presenters:

- Lisa Tolentino, Healthy Communities Consultant, Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition
- Brad Smith, Public Transportation Coordinator, Ride Norfolk

### Part 2: The importance of partnerships and collaborations to establishing rural transportation initiatives

The second webinar in the series examined the role of partnerships and collaborations in rural transportation initiatives.

#### Presenters:

- Susan Stolarchuk, Transit Administrator, Deseronto Transit
- Sue Shikaze, Health Promoter, Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge (HKPR) District Health Unit and Chair, Haliburton Communities in Action Committee

### Part 3: Garnering support from municipal representatives and community members

The third and final webinar in the series explored how to engage municipal representatives and community members in supporting an initiative.

#### Presenters:

- John Keith, Manager of Transportation Services, Community Care North Hastings, operator of The Rural Overland Utility Transit (TROUT)
- Jeannie Lee, Senior Policy Advisor, Municipal Transit Policy Office, Ministry of Transportation



*“Muskoka now has a reliable, affordable transportation option that fills a historical gap for essential services such as medical appointments or to educational opportunities”*

Rick Williams, Commissioner of Muskoka Community Services.  
Media Release, March 27, 2013



*"We didn't do any feasibility studies. With one-time funding of \$36,000, we figured the best way to gauge ridership was to put a bus out there. So that's what we did, and it worked for us."*

Colltrans

## Rural Transportation Initiatives Program Listing

One of the initial activities of the project was to conduct a scan to identify transportation initiatives that appear to be successful and potentially sustainable. A variety of types of initiatives were sought, including public transit, agency collaborations, ride/car-sharing and coordination and planning initiatives. Below is a list of the public and not-for-profit programs that participated in the scan:

### Special Populations

1. Community Care City of Kawartha Lakes Transportation Services
2. EasyRide (Huron-Perth)
3. MOVIN'GB Transportation
4. Saugeen Mobility and Regional Transit (SMART)
5. South-East Grey Support Services
6. Beaver Valley Outreach Special Needs Transportation
7. Belvedere Heights Community Support Services Volunteer Transportation
8. Canadian Red Cross
9. Community Care for South Hastings
10. Community Reach
11. Elmira Kiwanis
12. Lanark Transportation Association
13. Georgian Handivan Association
14. Muskoka Family Focus and Children's Place
15. Volunteer Transportation Program (Picton)
16. Wheels 4 Wheels-Hurononia Seniors Volunteer Care Team

### General Population

17. Collingwood-Wasaga Beach and Collingwood-Blue Mountains Transit Links
18. Deseronto Transit
19. Elmira Bus Route Service
20. Community Care: Northumberland Transportation Initiative
21. Kawartha Lakes Dial a Ride Rural Transit
22. Perth East Transportation
23. Ride Norfolk
24. Corridor 11 Bus
25. The Rural Overland Utility Transit (TROUT)
26. Town of Cobourg

### Information, Planning and Coordination

27. Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force - Transportation Action Group
28. Coordinated Transportation Strategy Committee (Grey County)
29. Huron Perth Transportation Network
30. Headwaters Communities in Action
31. Community Transportation Committee (Simcoe County)
32. Tillsonburg Transportation Working Group
33. Alzheimer Society of Simcoe County

### Active Transportation

34. Haliburton Communities in Action

### Ride-Sharing

35. Haliburton Rideshare-Rural Transportation Options



## Financial Feasibility Assessment of Cost-Shared Rural Transportation Models

Dillon Consulting was contracted to prepare a discussion paper for coordinating rural transportation services and a financial feasibility assessment of business/financial models that would enable coordination of transportation services among local transportation providers.

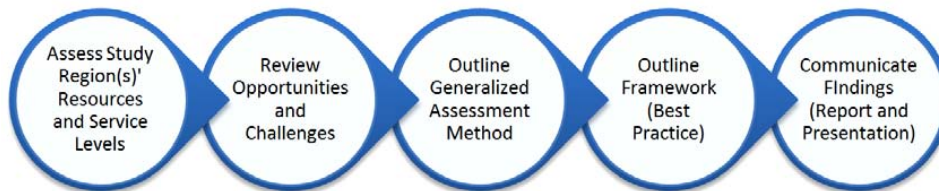
The goals of the study are to:

- illustrate the benefits of cost-shared transportation models;
- outline challenges and potential solutions; and
- develop a framework to identify and assess coordination opportunities and develop a cost-effective transportation model that meets the growing needs of residents in rural areas.

The key question of the study is: *“Would pooling resources and managing a system more comprehensively or collaboratively result in improved service or more universal accessibility in a region?”*

A more detailed question that needs to be answered is *“Which resources should be pooled and managed more comprehensively and collaboratively?”*

The workplan for the study has been divided into 5 segments;

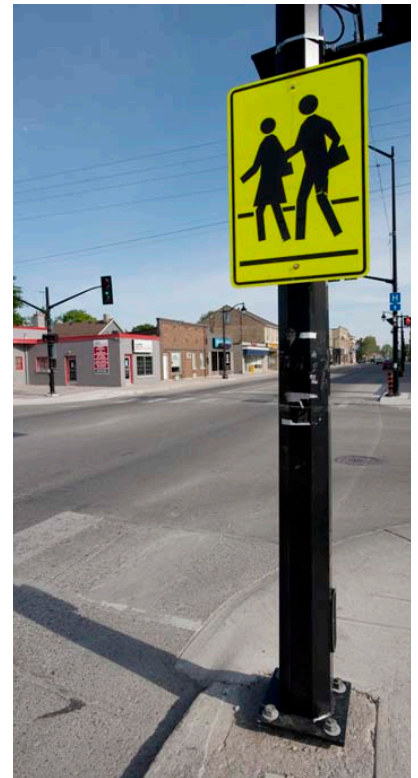


Three study regions were selected:

- Wellington County
- Dufferin County
- The United Counties of Leeds and Grenville

Workshops were held in each of the selected regions for stakeholders to provide background information and input into the study design.

Coordinated transportation has been a proven method used in a number of communities to address the challenges noted above. There are a number of coordination transportation models in existence, including coordination between municipalities, between community care providers and between municipalities and community care providers. This study will review different elements of coordination that are critical to success, while acknowledging that there is no “one size fits all” solution when it comes to developing a shared-resource model for public transportation.





## Case Studies

### 1. City of Kawartha Lakes Dial a Ride Rural Route Transit

The City of Kawartha Lakes Dial a ride Rural Route Transit provides bus service to connect Lindsay, Dunsford, Bobcaygeon, Fenelon Falls and Cameron. The service is operated by Niagara Classic Transport using three accessible buses with trained drivers. There are ten scheduled stops in two loops; one travelling clockwise and one travelling counter-clockwise. Each loop takes two hours to complete, with seven loops in each direction. It operates from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Fares are \$5.00, with children under five years riding for free. The service is available to the general public, but the bus will also make stops along the route, within 150 meters of the route, to service registered customers.

### 2. Collingwood-Wasaga Beach and Collingwood-Blue Mountains Transit Links

The Collingwood-Wasaga Beach and Collingwood-Blue Mountains Transit Links programs are relatively new initiatives in the South Georgian Bay area. The Collingwood-Wasaga Beach Link was started in August 2011 as a pilot partnership between the municipalities of Collingwood and Wasaga Beach with support from the County of Simcoe. Since then, it has become an integral component of the public systems for both communities with seven-days-a-week operations. The Collingwood-Blue Mountains Link was launched in November of 2013, also as a pilot service between the two municipalities. However, this pilot has been funded through a public private partnership among The Towns of Blue Mountains and Collingwood, as well as Blue Mountain Resorts Limited and the Blue Mountain Village Association. The results from the pilot, which is scheduled to be completed in August of 2014, will be used to help assess the long-term feasibility of this transit service.

### 3. Deseronto Transit

Deseronto Transit is a regional transit service that was established in 2007. Its aim is to provide low cost affordable transportation that will meet the needs of all individuals in the service area by providing mobility options to ensure access to work, education, health care, shopping, social and recreational opportunities.

It is operated by the Town of Deseronto, and guided by a Transit Board with representatives from organizations concerned with and/or working to assist low income individuals, seniors and the disabled. A Transit Administrator oversees all operations and is employed by the Town. Two community buses, both accommodating wheelchairs, and two mini-vans provide public transportation within the areas of Napanee, Belleville, Picton, Bloomfield, Tyendinaga Territory, Tyendinaga Township and Deseronto. There are two routes with four regularly scheduled service runs each. Departures start at 5:00am and 6:30 a.m. with returns ending at 5:05 p.m. Two late evening pickup times are based on demand, and a limited Saturday "share a ride service" booking also exists. Regional fares are based on distance with single fares ranging from \$6.00 to \$11.00.

### 4. EasyRide

EasyRide is a collaborative rural transportation service shared by six Community Support Agencies across Huron and Perth Counties. Started in 2008 as a result of funding through the South West LHIN's Aging at Home Strategy, the program relies on a central dispatch coordination system that leverages the fleet resources of the partner agencies to provide "frequent and flexible door-to-door service."

Transportation is available for registered clients who are seniors as well as for clients who are without access to transportation and have either physical or cognitive limitations.



## Case Studies

### 5. Lanark Transportation Association

The Lanark Transportation Association (LTA) is a not-for-profit organization that has been providing community-based transportation to residents of Lanark County and the Town of Smiths Falls since 2001. The LTA is served by a team of 11 paid drivers (with a couple of volunteer drivers available for overflow), as well as three full-time and one part-time staff persons providing administrative support. It is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, which includes representation from the County. Lanark Transportation Association provides transportation services for eligible residents to attend medical appointments, educational and training activities, agency-sponsored day programs, and other specialized services. They serve a base of over 5,000 riders, including seniors, children, people with disabilities, low income families and clients of agencies. The service has 13 vehicles on the road, four of which are wheelchair accessible. Fares are based on approximately 65 cents per kilometre and the cost of trips is subsidized to ensure affordability. The LTA provided over 15,000 trips in 2013, covering more than 507,000 kilometres.

### 6. Northumberland Transportation Initiative

The Northumberland Transportation Initiative (NTI) is the rural component of the Community Care Northumberland Transportation Program. Its goal is to implement an affordable and coordinated rural transit service in Northumberland County, in which each municipality participates and contributes to a single integrated rural transit service. It is available to anyone who resides in the county, as well as visitors to the county, but pre-registration is required. Currently, seven vans with paid drivers provide an on-demand service in Cramahe Township, Alnwick/Haldimand Township and the Municipality of Trent Hills. The service operates four days a week between 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

### 7. Ride Norfolk

The Ride Norfolk bus service was established in 2011 to provide reliable, affordable and accessible transportation options to residents of Norfolk County. It is operated by the Community Services Department of Norfolk County and is overseen by the Ride Norfolk Transportation Committee (RNTC). A Public Transportation Coordinator is employed by the County to manage the service. One accessible bus provides public transportation within Norfolk County under a service contract with a company that provides transportation services within South Central Ontario.

The bus operates a fixed route service from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday to Friday. Each day of the week has a different route, with scheduled stops in a total of 12 different communities as well as several stops within the five larger towns. Fares cost \$2.00 for in-town rides and \$6.00 each way when travelling between towns.



*"The ability of all residents to access services and to participate in economic and social life is dependent on the availability and quality of local transportation services and options. Access to reliable, affordable and alternative means of transportation, including public transportation, enhances the livelihood, economic stability and quality of life of all residents. The ability to participate and be actively engaged in activities are key elements of healthy and inclusive communities, making transportation an absolutely vital component."*

Poverty Reduction Strategy for the City of Kawartha Lakes and County of Haliburton:

Transportation Action Plan: Background and Resources; March 2014; p. 4:

<http://www.city.kawarthalakes.on.ca/residents/house-and-home/transportation-prs-background-march-2014.pdf>



*“In rural communities, we all pay for roads, for policing and for schools, but not for public transit. Why is that?”*

Gord MacDonald, Executive Director, Community Care North Hastings/TROUT

## Case Studies

### 8. Saugeen Mobility and Regional Transit (SMART)

Saugeen Mobility and Regional Transit (SMART) is an Ontario corporation without share capital owned by the participating partner municipalities in Bruce and Grey counties. The goal of SMART is “to provide a safe, dependable and affordable transportation service to any eligible client who wants service when they want it.”

The service provides non-emergency medical, employment and social transportation to individuals and groups in eight municipalities in the Counties of Bruce and Grey. The service is provided for residents with physical and/or mental challenges, including visual and cognitive challenges. Individual fares to destinations within the service area are \$2.00 plus \$.30 per kilometre, subject to a \$5.00 minimum. Fares to destinations outside the service area are \$.30 per kilometre plus \$18.00.

### 9. The Corridor 11 Bus

The Corridor 11 bus serves the 125 kilometre stretch of Highway 11 that runs between Huntsville at the north end and Barrie at the southernmost destination. The purpose of the bus is to provide a coordinated transportation option for Muskoka residents, specifically along the Highway 11 Corridor. It is operated by Hammond Transportation, under contract with the District Municipality of Muskoka. It operates Monday to Friday, making stops along the way in Bracebridge, Gravenhurst, Washago and Orillia.

The Corridor 11 bus serves the general population, including employees, seniors, low income families, disabled and children/youth. One-way fares are range from \$4.00 to \$22.00, and round-trip fares cost between \$15.00 and \$43.00. The ridership goal is approximately 90-100 passengers per week, and usage by the general public has been identified as a key to the program’s success.

### 10. The Rural Overland Utility Transit (TROUT)

The Rural Overland Utility Transit (TROUT) service was launched on May 3, 2010, after expanding an existing ‘handi-bus’ service for seniors to provide broader public transit for those within and around the town of Bancroft. TROUT offers a combined fixed route and specialized service as an efficient and effective model of operation for the area. It empowers non-driving residents with greater mobility to access the goods, services and social and cultural activities that allow them to remain in the region with independence and dignity.

There are four community buses, which all accommodate wheelchairs, travelling on three out-of-town routes and one within town. Each of the out-of-town routes runs one day per week, while the Bancroft route runs daily. Fares range between \$2 and \$10, depending on the destination.

TROUT’s current owner and operator, Community Care North Hastings, believes that collective operation of the public transit service by a local Transit Commission will make it more feasible and sustainable in the long term.

## Forums

The Rural Ontario Institute, in partnership with Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition, is hosting a series of three half-day forums to foster the sharing of knowledge of effective models and emerging innovation in rural regional transportation. A diverse group of stakeholders will gather to hear presentations about the various components of the Accelerating Rural Transportation Solutions project. A modest registration fee is being charged to offset the costs of refreshments or lunch and the cost of renting the venue. Dates and locations of the forums are:

### June 16, 2014 at the Walkerton Community Centre

10:00 AM to 2:30 PM (EDT)

Supported by our hosting partner Bruce County

### June 20, 2014 at the Orangeville Best Western Plus

10:00 AM to 2:00 PM (EDT)

Supported by our hosting partner Headwaters Communities in Action  
Transportation Learning Group

### June 23, 2014 at the Brockville Convention Centre

10:00 AM to 2:00 PM (EDT)

Supported by our hosting partner Every Kid In Our Communities

The agenda will include welcoming remarks by local officials, a Speed Networking session, and reports on the case studies and the financial feasibility assessment for cost-shared models. A panel of funders and operators will take questions and discuss barriers and opportunities for innovative rural transportation solutions. Small group discussions will enable participants to share their observations and experiences regarding rural transportation initiatives with their peers.

## Project Team

<b>Project Manager</b>	Norm Ragetlie, Rural Ontario Institute
<b>Feasibility Study Consultant</b>	Dennis Kar, Dillon Consulting
<b>Webinar Series Organizer</b>	Lisa Tolentino, Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition
<b>Forum Series Organizer</b>	Scott Currie, Rural Ontario Institute
<b>Case Studies Consultants</b>	Lorna McCue, Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition Lisa Tolentino, Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition Robb MacDonald, MacComm International Inc.

## For More Information

Information about the project is regularly updated on both partners' websites.

**Rural Ontario Institute**  
[ruralontarioinstitute.ca](http://ruralontarioinstitute.ca)  
519-826-4204

**Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition**  
[ohcc-ccso.ca](http://ohcc-ccso.ca)  
416-408-4841

