

# *Deseronto Transit*

**ACCELERATING RURAL  
TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS**



Information for this case study was provided by  
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## A. Overview of Transportation Initiative

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. The service is owned and operated by the Town of Deseronto, and guided by a Transit Committee 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 minivans 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 5:00 a.m. with returns ending at 5:05 p.m. Two late-evening pickup times based on demand and a limited Saturday “share a ride service” booking also exist. Regional fares are based on distance with single fares ranging from \$6.50 to \$12.00.



## B. Community Profile

### Location

Located on the north eastern shores of Lake Ontario, Deseronto Transit serves a number of communities in the eastern part of the Bay of Quinte area. This area is comprised of several small communities as well as the City of Belleville.<sup>1</sup> It is less than an hour west of Kingston and includes the Mohawk territory of Tyendinaga. In the Mohawk language the area is called “Kenhtë:ke”, which means “the place of the bay”.<sup>2</sup>

The northern side of the Bay itself is defined by Ontario’s mainland, while the southern side follows the shore of Prince Edward County. The bay runs west-southwest for 25 kilometres (to the town of Picton), where it turns north-northwest for another 20 kilometres (as far as Deseronto). The width of the bay rarely exceeds two kilometres. This area is also a gateway to the Trent-Severn Waterway, a canal connecting Lake Ontario to Lake Simcoe and then Georgian Bay on Lake Huron.<sup>3</sup>

### Population and Political Structures

The greater Bay of Quinte area has a population that exceeds 200,000 ranging from the City of Belleville, with a population of 49,454 and a density of 200.0/km<sup>2</sup>, to

<sup>1</sup> Bay of Quinte Recreation Guide and Business Directory: <http://bayofquinte.com/site/about/>; accessed March 12, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bay\\_of\\_Quinte](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bay_of_Quinte); accessed March 12 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

the Town of Deseronto, with a population of 1,835 and a density of 728.3/km<sup>2</sup>. The area served by Deseronto Transit includes the single tier municipalities of the Town of Deseronto, Tyendinaga Township, Tyendinaga Territory and the City of Belleville (within southern Hastings County); the Town of Greater Napanee (within Lennox and Addington County); and Bloomfield and Picton (within Prince Edward County).<sup>4</sup>

### **Economy**

The Bay of Quinte region is home to a large number of food-processing manufacturers and industries in the plastics and packaging sectors. There are over 350 industries located in the region, and most of these industries are located in and around the City of Belleville.<sup>5</sup>

While the area's primary economic base is manufacturing, it also relies on tourism. Tourism is especially significant in the summer months due to the area's fishing, golf courses, provincial parks and wineries. In particular, Prince Edward County, which includes the towns of Picton and Bloomfield, is Ontario's newest wine region.<sup>6</sup> The Bay of Quinte also provides some of the best trophy walleye angling in North America.<sup>7</sup>

The Bay, as the Bay of Quinte is locally known, is an area rich in Loyalist history. Native culture and history are also alive and well in this region, both within and around the Mohawk territory of Tyendinaga. These aspects of local history further draw tourists to the area.<sup>8</sup>

### **Major Destinations**

The main sources for employment, health and social services within the region are located in Belleville. For instance, Belleville General, a major hospital for the region, and the Hastings & Prince Edward Counties Health Unit are both within the city. The City of Belleville is also home to a variety of post-secondary schools such as



Loyalist College of Applied Arts and Technology, Maxwell College of Advanced Technology, CDI College and Ontario Business College. Each of these educational institutions serves the greater area of the Bay of Quinte and draws students from throughout the region.

### **Local Transportation Context**

Coach Canada and Greyhound buses and VIA rail services are offered within the area along both the TransCanada Highway (#401 locally) and the Toronto-Kingston route, but service is limited and only travels to and from Belleville and Napanee and not to the smaller communities. Public transportation operates within the urban area of the City of Belleville, through Belleville Transit, but not beyond. There are also taxi services available in Belleville, Napanee and within Prince Edward County. However, the fees are expensive, with a one-way taxi ride to Belleville from Deseronto or Picton costing \$40-68 or \$25-40 respectively.<sup>9</sup>

A newly founded bus company exists in Prince Edward County, offering tours and daily scheduled transport between many popular tourist destinations during the summer months, with rates ranging from \$10-45. However, the focus is not on accessing employment or other essential

<sup>4</sup> Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bay\\_of\\_Quinte](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bay_of_Quinte); accessed March 12 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Bay of Quinte Recreation Guide and Business Directory: <http://bayofquinte.com/site/about/>; accessed March 12, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bay\\_of\\_Quinte](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bay_of_Quinte); accessed March 12 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Bay of Quinte Recreation Guide and Business Directory: <http://bayofquinte.com/site/about/>; accessed March 12, 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Susan Stolarчук, Transit Administrator, Deseronto Transit; May 2, 2014.

services within the region, and it does not operate year-round. Also, Prince Edward County has become known as a cycling destination for tourists and therefore provides opportunities for local active transportation as well. While most roads do not have designated bicycle lanes, many side roads are paved and flat, providing both fantastic views and stops along the local Tastes and Arts Trails. Given the focus on agriculture in the region, signs are also posted in many areas reminding drivers of slow moving vehicles such as tractors.<sup>10</sup>

Like other rural areas within Ontario, the lack of affordable and accessible public transportation options affects everyone, but it is a particular challenge to people with low incomes, the elderly, people with disabilities, and families with children.

### C. Background

#### **Previous Public Transportation Initiatives<sup>11</sup>**

Prior to the development of Deseronto Transit, transportation in Deseronto was, and still is, offered for seniors and people with disabilities through a volunteer driver program operated by Community Care for South Hastings. However, wheelchair access is usually not available as volunteers use personal vehicles to provide the service.

A local cab company also operated out of Deseronto until recently, but rising taxi fares made it extremely difficult for those on fixed incomes to get around. Since the cab company went out of business, residents must now request a cab to come from Napanee or Belleville to service their needs, driving the costs even higher. Using a taxi service to maintain employment or attend college is not monetarily feasible. There was also a service provided by Trentway-Wagar Bus Lines with a route to or from Belleville and Kingston once per day, with no same-day return. However, this service is no longer available.



#### **Background of Current Initiative**

In 2002, an Interagency Network Group was formed in Deseronto to share resources and attempt to address the challenges faced by residents of the town. For instance, many social and health services available to those living in Deseronto are located outside of the town and have to be accessed through other areas within Hastings County. Additionally, employment opportunities within the Town of Deseronto are limited, with few employers and only one manufacturer employing a small number of people. Belleville is the nearest location to services and also offers increased access to employment, but it is approximately 30 kilometres away.<sup>12</sup>

The Interagency Network Group determined that transportation was a significant barrier for Deseronto residents. They commissioned the study *Deseronto Community Transportation Strategy: An Assessment of Needs*, which was completed in June 2002 and funded by the local United Way. The study demonstrated that transportation was a “major barrier” for 35% of respondents to a survey.<sup>13</sup>

In 2005, Norm Clark, Councillor for the Town of Deseronto, joined the Interagency Network Group. This

<sup>10</sup> Wikitravel, the free travel guide; [http://wikitravel.org/en/Prince\\_Edward\\_County](http://wikitravel.org/en/Prince_Edward_County); accessed May 2, 2014.

<sup>11</sup> This section is from the interview with Susan Stolarchuk, Transit Administrator, Deseronto Transit, May 2, 2014.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Susan Stolarchuk, Transit Administrator, Deseronto Transit, May 2, 2014.

<sup>13</sup> Stacey Wagner, Deseronto Community Transportation Strategy: An Assessment of Needs, Quinte United Way, 2002.

was of significant benefit to the goals and objectives of the committee because they could communicate more directly with council. As a result, municipal support for a pilot transportation project was gained at this level.<sup>14</sup>

In 2006, Hastings County Social Services received a grant through the Regional Homelessness Initiative Project to develop the *Deseronto Homelessness and Affordable Housing Community Action Plan*. This report was intended to address service gaps in the community for those who were homeless or precariously housed. Statistics revealed that, in 2006, 40.6% of residents in Deseronto were in receipt of social assistance payments. For these individuals, transportation was identified as a barrier to accessing necessary supports and services, employment and education opportunities, as well as basic daily living needs.<sup>15</sup>

Referencing the two studies, an application to conduct a pilot transportation project was submitted to the Employment Innovation Fund, which was provided through the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. The proposal was written by Lori Brooks, Job Information Clerk for Hastings County and Frances Smith, CEO for the Deseronto Public Library and was submitted through the Town of Deseronto. In March 2007, a grant for \$225,000 was received and a pilot project was launched. Clear goals and measurable deliverables were set by the funding body. Indicators for success were as follows: 40 Ontario Works (OW) or Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) clients were to be employed for 13 weeks, and the transportation service was to become sustainable after December 31, 2007.<sup>16</sup>

By the end of the funding period in December 2007, there were 70 job placements obtained and 30 clients no longer needing social assistance. The pilot was not only a

success, it exceeded expectations. As a result, the Town of Deseronto decided to continue to support the service and make it available to the general public.

### **Initial Funding Sources**

In addition to the \$225,000 in seed funding obtained from the Ministry of Community and Social Services Employment Innovation Fund in 2007, there were other forms of assistance that helped to support the creation of a local transportation service initially. In 2008, a generous capital grant of \$85,000 from the local John M. & Bernice Parrott Foundation made an addition to the fleet possible by way of the purchase of a new bus. Also, the federal Homelessness Partnering Initiative provided a capital grant of \$20,000 in 2009.<sup>17</sup>

Other contributions were received for operations from the Child Benefit Reinvestment Fund through both Hastings County Social Services and Prince Edward Lennox & Addington Social Services. These were both annual and one time contributions ranging from \$15-35,000. From 2008 to 2012, the Town of Deseronto also contributed a substantial amount annually, with contributions in the \$45-55,000 range. This represented anywhere from 18-26% of total operating expenses. Starting in 2009, funds were also received from the provincial gas tax fund. Between 2009 and 2011, these amounts ranged from \$17-18,500 per year.<sup>18</sup>

### **Local Support for Transportation Initiative**

Initial research, through the 2002 study *Deseronto Community Transportation Strategy: An Assessment of Needs*, showed that local support from the community for a public transit service was very positive.<sup>19</sup> Also, the fact that low-income individuals experience barriers to accessing transportation was further recognized at the

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Susan Stolarchuk, Transit Administrator, Deseronto Transit, May 2, 2014.

<sup>15</sup> Hastings County Social Services Affordable Housing Action Network, *Deseronto Homelessness and Affordable Housing Community Action Plan*, Regional Homeless Initiative, 2006.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Susan Stolarchuk, Transit Administrator, Deseronto Transit, May 2, 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Susan Stolarchuk, PowerPoint presentation: HCLink webinar on March 19, 2014; and Interview with Susan Stolarchuk, Transit Administrator, Deseronto Transit, May 2, 2014.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Susan Stolarchuk, Transit Administrator, Deseronto Transit, May 2, 2014.

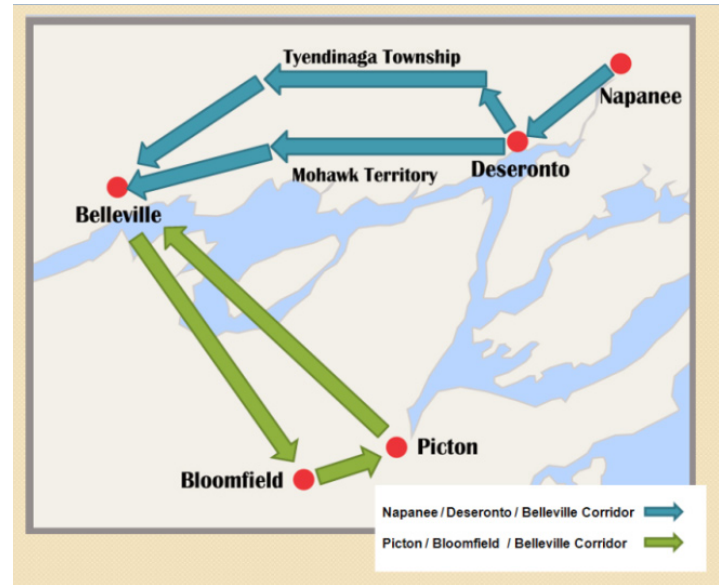
provincial level through a report released in December 2008 called *Breaking the Cycle: Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy*. This report stated that "inadequate access to transportation is a key barrier to employment for some social assistance recipients. If people cannot get to work, they cannot work."<sup>20</sup> Both of these things helped to justify the establishment of a public transit service locally.

As previously mentioned, initial support at the municipal level was gained through representation from the Town of Deseronto Council when they began participating in the Interagency Network Group. Municipal backing, through both representation and financial contribution, was critical to the success and survival of the service. This was not only important in terms of providing local support, but also because it made Deseronto Transit eligible to receive funding from the provincial gas tax fund.

Also, Deseronto Transit's Management Committee was, and still is, comprised of professionals whose work is concerned with strategies to assist individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities to achieve optimum social functioning. Through members of this committee, many contacts have been made and sources of funding identified. Additionally, being able to list the various organizational members of the Committee on funding applications has both demonstrated collaboration and added a high degree of credibility to proposals.<sup>21</sup>

## D. Current Operations

Deseronto Transit serves portions of Hastings, Prince Edward and Lennox & Addington Counties. It is currently a regional transit service that links Napanee, Deseronto, Tyendinaga Territory, Tyendinaga Township, Picton and Bloomfield to Belleville. The system has two main objectives: 1) to provide low cost affordable transportation that will meet the transportation 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, and 2) sustainability. The service is open to all members of the public.

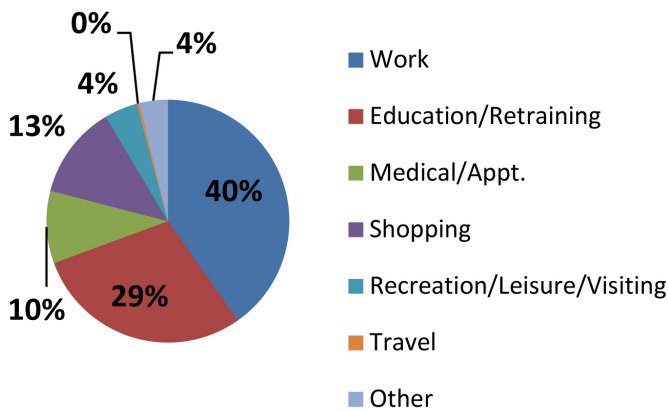


Deseronto Transit is owned and operated by the Town of Deseronto, but it is guided by a committee comprised of professionals who represent organizations concerned with and/or working to assist low-income individuals, seniors and people with disabilities. The Transit Management Committee and the Transit Administrator oversee all operations. The Transit Management Committee is made up of key individuals that have been instrumental to the service's success. Committee members in 2014 include: the Mayor of Deseronto; a Councillor for the Town of Deseronto (Chairperson); the Secretary to the Executive Director of Hastings County Social Services; the Manager of Prince Edward Lennox & Addington Social Services; a representative of the Ontario Disability Support Program; a Job Information Clerk at Hastings County Social Services; a Councillor for the Town of Greater Napanee and a business owner; a Deseronto business owner; and the Transit Administrator (staff). There are also five part-time drivers and one newly added part-time Administrative Assistant.

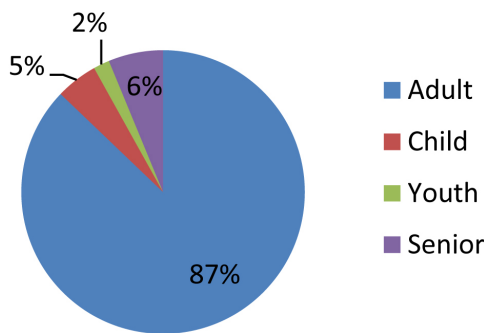
<sup>20</sup> Government of Ontario, *Breaking the Cycle: Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy*, December 2008, p.30.

<sup>21</sup> Susan Stolarchuk, PowerPoint presentation: HCLink webinar on March 19, 2014; and Interview with Susan Stolarchuk, Transit Administrator, Deseronto Transit, May 2, 2014.

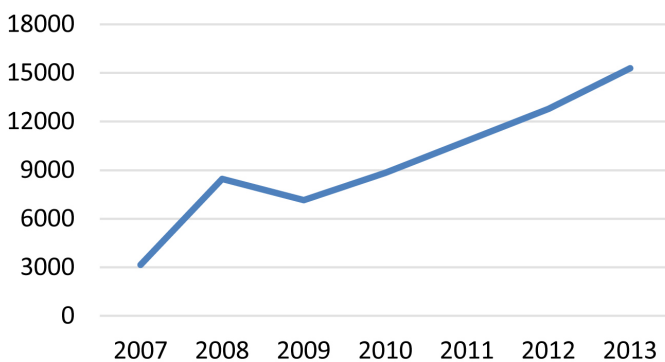
**Reasons for Riding  
Jan to Dec 2013**



**Ridership Demographic  
Adults/Seniors/Youth/Children  
Jan to Dec 2013**



**Deseronto Transit Ridership  
2007 - 2013**



**Routes and Schedules<sup>22</sup>**

Deseronto Transit operates two buses (one seating 11 passengers and one wheelchair, the other seating 16 passengers and two wheelchairs) and two minivans travelling along two main corridors operating, and four routes per day through each corridor. The first corridor travels through South Hastings and Lennox & Addington Counties from Napanee, Deseronto, Tyendinaga Township and Tyendinaga Territory to Belleville and back. The second corridor travels within Prince Edward County through Bloomfield and Picton to Belleville (in south Hastings County) and back. Both routes offer two morning departures, an afternoon departure and a return route at the end of the day. Routes were designed to facilitate employment and start as early as 5:00 a.m. with a return time of 5:05 p.m.

While Deseronto Transit is classified as a conventional transit service with a relatively fixed route and set schedules, it also maintains some flexibility using different routes to get to destinations based on client need (along the Deseronto Corridor only). For instance, riders are able to call in their location and the driver will take the route closest to the riders to accommodate them. They also offer door-to-door service for seniors and those with mobility restrictions if their pickup location is close to the service’s main route. In addition, the corridor serving the Deseronto area has a pre-booked, shared-ride, night-time service that allows for two additional pickup times that vary based on need. Typical pickup times for this are 9:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m., but they can run as late as midnight. The night time service was designed to facilitate shift work, but it is also used for shopping, recreation and leisure.

**Ridership<sup>23</sup>**

While the service began only serving clients of Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program during the pilot project phase, Deseronto Transit is now available to anyone within the general population and has been since 2009. Ridership for the entire year, from January to December of 2013, is reflected in the two pie graphs to the left. As the pie graphs demonstrate, the majority

<sup>22</sup> Information in this section is from information provided for the project Environmental Scan: and Susan Stolarchuk, PowerPoint presentation: HCLink webinar on March 19, 2014.

<sup>23</sup> This section is from the Interview with Susan Stolarchuk, Transit Administrator, Deseronto Transit, May 2, 2014.

of riders in 2013 were adults using the service to access employment and education.

Ridership has grown steadily since the start of the service from 3,157 trips taken in 2007 to 15,288 trips taken in 2013. As the line graph on the previous page shows, a sharp increase occurred between 2007 and 2008 because the service became open to the general public after the first year of operation. While ridership numbers may seem small in comparison to larger urban centres, there exist greater barriers geographically to accessing supports, services and employment in rural areas due to a lack of transportation options. As a result, the service provided by Deseronto Transit is critical to many of its passengers in terms of their being able to access employment, various supports, health and social services (including basic daily living needs such as adequate food supplies).

### **Operating Costs and Revenues**

Growth has been experienced in terms of both ridership and revenues. Funding for operation of the service is currently provided by: The Town of Deseronto; The Town of Greater Napanee; Tyendinaga Township; Hastings County; the United Way of Quinte; Prince Edward, Lennox & Addington Social Services (through a commitment to purchase a set number of bus passes per month); and through the provincial gas tax program. As of printing time for this report, talks were also underway with representatives of the Municipality of Picton regarding their potential financial support for the service.<sup>24</sup>

Contributions made specifically by the Town of Deseronto have ranged from over \$55,000 in the initial year to \$30,000 for 2013. This represents a change from 29% of the overall annual budget in 2008 to 9% in 2013. The Town's contribution has been able to decrease over time, even though service has increased, as a result of

financial contributions from other municipalities as well as resulting increases in provincial gas tax allocations. For example, the situation changed substantially in 2012 when increased financial support was received from the provincial gas tax fund, and the funding allocation increased from \$17,500 in 2011 to \$105,575 in 2012. This was an increase of over 600% in one year and was due to a combination of additional financial support being received from the Town of Greater Napanee and the fact that their population could now be included in the Gas Tax funding formula. This enabled the Town of Deseronto to reduce their financial contribution from 25% to 18% in that same year.<sup>25</sup>

In terms of revenues from fares, these represent the largest single source of income, generating close to \$110,000 in 2013. Individual fares are based on regional distance travelled and range from \$6.50 to \$12.00. Reduced single fare rates exist for seniors, youth and children, as well as through the purchasing of books of tickets and two-week and monthly passes.<sup>26</sup>

In 2013, salaries represented the greatest expense for the service, followed closely by the operation, purchase and maintenance of vehicles. The overall operating budget in 2013 was approximately \$330,000.<sup>27</sup>

Deseronto Transit also provides charters and a range of advertising opportunities in order to obtain additional revenue. Advertising space is available on the vehicles and in the bus depot. Their transit vehicles are becoming increasingly recognizable and visible as they travel through the region many times a day, to populated destinations notably Deseronto, Napanee, Belleville, Prince Edward County, and Tyendinaga Territory.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Susan Stolarchuk, Transit Administrator, Deseronto Transit, May 2, 2014.

<sup>25</sup> Susan Stolarchuk, PowerPoint presentation: HCLink webinar on March 19, 2014.

<sup>26</sup> Susan Stolarchuk, PowerPoint presentation: HCLink webinar on March 19, 2014; and Interview with Susan Stolarchuk, Transit Administrator, Deseronto Transit, May 2, 2014.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Susan Stolarchuk, Transit Administrator, Deseronto Transit, May 2, 2014.

<sup>28</sup> Deseronto Transit website: <http://deseronto.ca/departments/deseronto-transit/>; accessed May 4, 2014.





### Challenges <sup>29</sup>

The greatest challenge operating a public transit service is the high cost. Fares alone do not cover the costs of operation, and a small municipality does not have the tax base to support such a service. Additionally, the formula used to determine the amount of gas tax funds that are allocated includes the population of a region only if the municipalities in the area being served financially support the service. Therefore, even though Deseronto Transit provides regional public transit servicing the areas of Napanee, Tyendinaga Territory, Tyendinaga Township, Bloomfield and Picton, because these areas were not financially supporting the service initially, the funding formula for the gas tax could not include these populations, thereby limiting the amount of funds received. As a result, consistent funding sources had to be found through grants and the development of partnerships that were mutually beneficial.

Another challenge in the initial stage of the program was that large used buses were purchased to run the one year pilot project. Consequently, there were high costs for repairs and fuel consumption, and the Town of Deseronto Council was led to consider the continuation of the program. Had it not been for a grant from the Parrott Foundation for the purchase of a new fuel-efficient vehicle, Council very likely would have opted to shut down the service because of the high costs associated with operating it.

In addition, public opinion is not always favourable to public transit given that there is a very car-centric attitude held by those who do not use the service. This attitude needs to be overcome for continued support at the municipal level as, while both municipal and public support for Deseronto Transit are favourable at present, this has not always been the case. About five years into the operation of the service, support from the general public was beginning to wane. Due to rising policing costs, wage equity legislation, costs associated with operating a regional transit service and a reduction in funds provided to all municipalities from the provincial government, taxes would need to be increased. Although the municipality viewed the service as valuable and needed by many residents, the costs and benefits were being questioned. It was around this time, in 2012, that news came of the huge increase to be received from the annual provincial gas tax allotment. This meant that the contribution made by the Town of Deseronto could decrease substantially and so Council was able to make the decision to commit to transit on an ongoing basis.

There are also many legislative requirements that come with operating and maintaining a public service, and it can be a challenge to keep up with these. For example, current operations accommodate riders with disabilities by allowing for door-to-door pickup, with the driver leaving the fixed route within reason. Most of the service area has other agencies already providing accessible transportation which then takes the onus off of Deseronto Transit to accommodate them. However, the recent Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) still requires that the service comply with all legislation, and it is taking considerable time and resources to develop the necessary policies and procedures, and make the physical changes that need to be implemented. For instance, new requirements in 2017 will be that automated voice announcement technology be installed. This is very costly, and there is no way that it can be afforded using current resources (e.g., a recently received quote stated that it would cost \$100,000 for the software in the office and an additional \$30,000 per vehicle). Therefore, it is the intention of the service to apply for funds for assistance through the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

<sup>29</sup> This entire section is from the interview with Susan Stolarчук, Transit Administrator, Deseronto Transit, May 2, 2014.

Finally, while ridership continues to steadily increase in the current service areas (illustrating a definite need for public transportation), there remain significant gaps in service that cannot be addressed given present revenue streams. A common complaint stems from the limited amount of routes that can be offered. Not only have requests been made to expand the service to other areas (e.g., within Prince Edward County), but greater frequency of service is also desired on existing routes so as to meet various transportation needs (such as those going to medical appointments or returning from work in the middle of the day).

### **Impacts and Successes<sup>30</sup>**

Numerous studies and research have been, and are currently being, conducted on the 'value' of public transportation for communities. Most have stated that it is difficult to quantify just how many of the benefits to a community can be attributed to having public transit available. As a small transit operation, Deseronto Transit does not have the resources to pursue research specific to its area at this time.

However, as part of their funding agreement with the local United Way agency, Deseronto Transit participates in Outcome Measurement Reporting. This involves annually evaluating the service and reporting the resulting data to the United Way of Quinte. Data collected through the use of surveys has assisted the service in determining overall impact, planning route development and changes, and making other management decisions. For instance, a survey conducted in 2011 to assess the impact of the provision of Deseronto Transit has on ridership found the following (based on 47 responses):

- 94% - Improved access to vital services
- 89% - Improved quality of life
- 81% - Achieved more disposable income
- 11% - Obtained employment
- 23% - Remained employed

In addition, the Transit Administrator has received numerous messages from passengers telling her how the service has personally helped them to improve their quality of life. From these personal accounts, along with the evaluations for funders, it becomes clear that Deseronto Transit plays an instrumental role in providing access to education, employment supports (e.g., life skills, job search), employment itself, and basic needs (such as food and health care). By providing an affordable and flexible public transportation option for obtaining and maintaining long-term employment, Deseronto Transit in turn helps to reduce poverty for both individuals and families within the Bay of Quinte region.

As previously mentioned, the Transit Administrator and other members of the Transit Management Committee belong to and/or network with service agencies in the catchment areas, and the success of the program relies on them to provide information on service needs and gaps. While no research or studies have been performed by the transit service due to a lack of available human resources, Deseronto Transit has developed working relationships with social agencies concerned with the benefit of Aboriginal peoples, and the program serves the Aboriginal community within the Mohawk First Nation's Tyendinaga Territory.

Deseronto Transit is currently in a better financial position than it has ever been. Through repeated lobbying efforts by representatives for the service, the Town of Greater Napanee and Tyendinaga Township both agreed to support Deseronto Transit with annual commitments of \$1,000 (starting in 2011 and 2012 respectively). As a result, Deseronto Transit's provincial gas tax funding allocation will be \$156,000 in 2014. Most municipally owned and operated public transit organizations are funded by the municipality at a level of 55-60% of the annual operating budget. Yet, thanks to contributions from the other municipalities combined with the gas tax allocation, the Town of Deseronto is only required to provide a contribution of 9% of the service's total operating budget. This is considered to be a success story by both the Transit Management Committee and the Town Council itself.

<sup>30</sup> This entire section is from the interview with Susan Stolarчук, Transit Administrator, Deseronto Transit; May 2, 2014.

### Other Community Support

Deseronto Transit has a number of key partnerships which contribute to its success. One of them is with Prince Edward, Lennox & Addington Social Services (PELASS) which commits to a set number of bus pass purchases per month, in return for a route that facilitates transportation for medical purposes. On an annual basis, PELASS purchases \$25,200 in bus passes providing guaranteed income for Deseronto Transit and saving the agency a significant amount in taxi fares.

Currently the Transit Administrator is also a participant in the Vital Signs Working Group operating out of Prince Edward County. This group is dedicated to closing transportation gaps in their community. Intra-city transit service is one of the initiatives being pursued as well as expanded and increased transit services. The Vital Signs Group will be developing a proposal to present to local municipalities outlining the need for increased transit service and their recommendations.<sup>31</sup>

Deseronto Transit is also a member of Hastings and Prince Edward Transportation Solutions, which is a 28-member committee with the mission of creating “an integrated, barrier-free transportation system that gets people where they need to go.” It is the vision of the committee to establish “a resident focused collaborative, integrated transportation system that provides an easily accessible information portal of all local transportation resources and effectively and efficiently moves people to services within and outside of Hastings and Prince Edward Counties.” Other members include: Kingston General Hospital, United Way of Quinte, the Community Cares for North, Central & South Hastings, Hastings Children’s Aid Society, Canadian Cancer Society, and The Rural Overland Utility Transit (TROUT).<sup>32</sup>

### E. Future Considerations

Long-term sustainability is the primary focus for Deseronto Transit at present. With the increased funds being received through the provincial gas tax program, they are now able to build a reserve account for the replacement of transit vehicles. The ability to do this is critical to the survival of the service, and it is hoped that enough money will be accumulated within the next year to replace an aging 11-passenger bus in 2015. Extra funds will not be spent on expansion of service until a healthy reserve account is established. Not only will this reserve account be used for the replacement of vehicles, but it is also required in case of any unforeseen shortages in the Budget.

Deseronto Transit is also looking to expand its partnerships in the future and, as explained above, is currently working with groups in Prince Edward County to look at ways to address transportation gaps within their community. In 2013 a survey was conducted to help determine where changes could be made to the transit service (within this catchment area) that would have a positive impact on riders. The results from 33 respondents showed that:

- 85% said there is a need for increased service
- 66% said a mid-morning departure is needed
- 69% said an intra-city service within Prince Edward County is desired.

The belief is that intra-city transit could be implemented within the County with very little increased cost.

As previously discussed, other future plans could include greater frequency of service at peak ridership time slots and an additional mid-morning departure, which would greatly benefit the aging and retired populations. However, any extensions to service would have to be financially supported by the municipalities affected and/or through other sources of revenue.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Susan Stolarchuk, Transit Administrator, Deseronto Transit, May 2, 2014.

<sup>32</sup> Hastings and Prince Edward Transportation Solutions website: <http://www.hpetransportation.ca/>; accessed March 27, 2014.