

Phase 1: Context

2020: Ontario Government published a transportation planning document with 5 goals for connecting southwestern Ontario:

1. Get people moving and connect communities
2. Support a competitive open-for-business environment
3. Improve highway/road safety
4. Provide more transportation choice and convenience
5. Prepare for the future

Key Transportation Issues for Southwestern Ontario:

- Need rural-urban transit connections to access services and connect urban labour force to rural jobs.
- Address volume and mix of road users on peak summer routes to key tourist destinations

HSAT Commentary: Our transit system was one of the outcomes of these goals under the "Community Transportation" grant. Our area does not have enough people to fill all the jobs in our area. We need young workers from Sarnia and London and elsewhere. Our roads experience much higher traffic in summer months, leading to increased safety issues (study identified Highway 21 in particular).

Phase 2: Identify Needs & Opportunities

Takes a 30-year perspective for needs and opportunities related to infrastructure improvements, service and operational improvements, safety and emergency management (relative to transportation), improvements of secondary transport facilities like rest stops and possible innovative solutions.

Under each goal, we've listed only those subitems that particularly apply to HSAT service area.

Goal 1: Connect People & Places

- Improve provincial highways with high traffic volumes and congestion mitigation in locations with heavy seasonal demand.
- Create hub-and-spoke transit network to build and strengthen passenger transportation connections.

Goal 2: Support a competitive business environment

- Facilitate economic development and growth by supporting local industrial economies through transportation systems and access to recreational and tourism opportunities. Includes expanding cycling tourism and mitigating road congestion in locations with heavy seasonal demand.

Goal 3: Provide choice and convenience

- Intercommunity and local transit access to essential services and opportunities
- Service to tourism destinations
- Regional coordination to expand and integrate transit services

Goal 4: Increasing health, safety and inclusion

- Improve highway safety
- Intercommunity and local transit access to essential services and opportunities

Goal 6: Ensure environmental sustainability (resilience and adaptation)

- Highway infrastructure resilient to climate change and increase reliability of the transportation network

HSAT Phase 2 Commentary:

- Highway 21 topped the list of Ontario highways identified for road closures. The most frequent causes were weather (snowfall, blowing snow, dangerous road conditions), followed by "incidents" (think seasonal high volume) and "other."
- Our area was identified as needing public transit to connect residents to community services and businesses and to promote greater inter-community connections (e.g., Sarnia, London, Strathroy, Goderich).

Phase 3: Action Development & Evaluation

Generate options, evaluate them, and decide which ones should be implemented.

The survey you're invited to complete is part of the EVALUATION of options that could be put into action!

We've included only those goals and options that directly apply to HSAT service area.

Goal 1: Connect People & Places

Option: Minimize travel delay options:

- Targeted improvements on highways with high traffic volumes and congestion.
- Promote transit-oriented land use, such as development of housing along rapid transit corridors.

Option: Connect urban and rural areas, including Indigenous communities

- Improve transit connectivity through on-demand, micro-transit and other service models

Goal 2: Support a Competitive Business Environment

Option: Facilitate goods movements

- Support agricultural industries through infrastructure and programs that improve access to agrarian communities and accommodate large and slow-moving vehicles.

Option: Strengthen connections to jobs

Option: Increase access to recreation and tourism

- Ensure transportation networks support tourism industry, such as providing improved wayfinding and access to destinations.

Goal 3: Provide transportation choice and convenience

Option: Integrate transportation services and modes

- Support and expand regional transit coordination initiatives
- Work with local and regional service providers to develop mobility hubs and improve integration between passenger rail and local transit networks
- Improve first and last-mile connectivity to and from transit nodes

HSAT Commentary: Think how this option might help connect HSAT to Middlesex and Perth County rural transit systems, the VIA Rail station in St. Mary's, and enable greater reach to connect communities such as Credition, Shipka, Mt. Carmel, Greenway, Clinton etc. to access HSAT bus stops or perhaps "virtual" bus stops.

Option: Improve competitiveness of non-auto options

- Improve effectiveness and competitiveness of inter-community transit.

HSAT Commentary: Think continued low cost, increased frequency, greater reach.

Goal 4: Increase health, safety and inclusion

Option: Improve highway safety

- Implement measures to reduce collisions related to bad weather, vulnerable road users, road-rail crossings and increase compliance with road rules.

HSAT Commentary: Think how this option could improve Highway 21 in terms of the amount of traffic, its speed, improvements to the road itself, traffic lights, roundabouts, light stop signs etc.

Option: Connect to critical services

- Provide equitable access to critical services and employment using public transit

Option: Transportation equity

- Address transportation needs in equity-deserving communities, such as Indigenous communities, low-income communities, rural communities, and persons with disabilities, through guidelines, funding and policy.

HSAT Commentary: Continued financial support for small rural public transit systems like HSAT beyond the pilot project end date of March 31, 2025. Maintenance of what we have and expansion of the system, more buses perhaps!

Goal 6: Ensure environmental sustainability

Option: Build climate resilience and adaptation

- Manage and respond to climate risks on highway infrastructure to promote resilience
- Establish resources to enable integration of climate change considerations for future transportation plans

HSAT Commentary: Again, think Highway 21.