



Serving the residents of
Lambton Shores,
Kettle & Stony Point FN,
South Huron,
Bluewater
and
North Middlesex.

HURON SHORES AREA TRANSIT REPORT 2022

Summary and Score Card of Huron Shores Area Transit (HSAT) status in 2022, development, and 2023 goals.

Susan Mills, Transit Coordinator
Municipality of Lambton Shores



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About Huron Shores Area Transit

Huron Shores Area Transit (HSAT) serves the residents of Lambton Shores, Kettle & Stony Point FN, South Huron, Bluewater, and North Middlesex. We are funded by an Ontario Community Transportation Grant (CTA program) of \$3,065,946:

- 2018 – 2023 (March 31): \$2 million
- 2023 (April 1) – 2025 (March 31): \$1,065,946

The funding was part of \$14 million the province committed in support of public transit to 38 Ontario communities.

Transit Advisory Committee

The Transit Advisory Committee emerged in 2019 from the earlier 2017 Huron Shores Transit Steering Committee, which formed as a grassroots advocacy group from healthcare, social services, business, municipal and private partners, and economic development, who had identified public transit as a major opportunity for community sustainability. The diversity of the Committee's stakeholders brings a breadth of perspective, experience and knowledge to transit decisions.

Current members include:

- Winona Bailey, Bluewater Councillor and official representative from the municipality, community volunteer.
- Glen Baillie, Committee Chair, Past-President of Grand Bend & Area Chamber of Commerce, Lambton Shores Councillor, local business owner and community volunteer.
- Darren Boyle, Director of Grand Bend & Area Chamber of Commerce, and hockey and softball coach.
- Laura Connolly, Manager of Exeter BIA.
- Doug Cooke, Mayor of Lambton Shores and official representative from the Municipality.
- Janet Ferguson, Treasurer of Lambton Shores and managing supervisor of Huron Shores Area Transit.
- Todd Jardine, Executive Director, Southwind Corporate Development Inc., Kettle & Stony Point First Nation representative.
- Lorri Kerrigan, Social Planner, Social Planning and Children's Services Department, County of Lambton.
- Cindy Maxfield, Health Promotion and Partnership Coordinator, Grand Bend Area Community Health Centre.
- Rebekah Msuya-Collison, Municipal Clerk of South Huron and official representative from the municipality.
- Bruce Shaw, retired Executive Director of Community Living South Huron, former principal of South Huron District High School, and Grand Bend Rotary Club member.

- Lynne VanHaaren, retired Firm Administrator of MPW Chartered Professional Accountants LLP, Club Manager of Forest Curling Club, Director of Forest BIA Board of Directors.
- Kyle Walker, Job Developer, Cooperative Education and Employment Ontario, Lambton College.

Mission

Enable equal access to community life and assets for all residents and thereby also contribute to the economic development, sustainability, and vibrancy of our communities.

Goals

1. **EQUITY:** Improve community residents' access, equity, and mobility to community assets (employment, educational, medical, social, retail, recreational, and natural).
2. **ECONOMY:** Support community livability and economic prosperity by enabling and increasing connections between residents and businesses, employment, skills training/education, and thereby reducing outmigration of residents and the local labour pool.

Quick Facts

- \$5 fare. Children 12 and under ride free with an adult.
- 2 buses.
- 4 bus routes.
- 1 bus serves 3 routes.
- 22 towns/villages served.
- 51 bus stops.
- Route 2 bus switches at noon to service Route 3 and Route 4.
- Bus Hub is Sobeys Plaza (Grand Bend).
- Bus Hub enables passengers to transfer between buses to reach other destinations.

Route 1: Sarnia to Grand Bend. Three bus runs per day, seven days per week. Stops at Sarnia, Forest, Arkona, Thedford, Kettle & Stony Point, Army Camp Rd., Port Franks, Northville, and Grand Bend.

Route 2: Grand Bend to London. Two bus runs per day, seven days per week. Stops at Grand Bend, Dashwood, Exeter, Huron Park, Centralia, Lucan, and London.

Route 3: Grand Bend to Goderich. Operates three afternoons per week (Monday, Wednesday and Friday), two bus runs per day. Stops at Grand Bend, St. Joseph, Zurich, Hensall, Bayfield, and Goderich.

Route 4: Grand Bend to Strathroy: Operates two afternoons per week (Tuesday and Thursday), two bus runs per day. Stops at Parkhill, Ailsa Craig, and Strathroy.

Score Card

Financial

The grant/government year runs from April 1 to March 31.

Revenue

	Launch			Estimate		Goal
	2020/21 Year 3	2021/22 Year 4	2022/23 Year 5	2023/24 Year 6	2024/25 Year 7	
Gas Tax Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		\$254,805 ^a
Farebox	\$0	\$10,264	\$28,294 ^c	\$112,800 ^d		\$309,740
Advertising^b	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$18,000		\$20,000
Donations	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$10,000		\$10,000

Notes:

- Gas Tax Fund support is capped to 75% of HSAT's revenues.
- Transit advertising is located on shelters and inside and outside the bus. Currently, there are no advertising opportunities, as we have no transit shelters and the buses need to a framework installed for interior advertising banners. Bus exterior is being used to promote HSAT.
- Fares collected in cash and Smart Cards April 1, 2022 to January 31, 2023. Fiscal year finishes March 31, 2023. Estimate achieving \$34k in fares by March 31, 2023.
- Based on 2022 ridership data, 41% of rides are long-distance. Reinstatement of \$10 for long-distance trips is expected to result in an additional \$32k more than all trips being \$5 (goal to double ridership to 16,000 rides).

Expenses

	2020	2021	2022
Voyago	\$18,198.98	\$421,865.91	\$494,808.10
Fuel Cost	\$4,373.23	\$89,072.40	\$138,410.38
Transitfare	N/A	\$75,345.01	\$13,426.66

Notes: Transitfare is a purchased service that provides the onboard fare and ticket issuing equipment, with built-in contactless smart card processor, wireless data transfer, and GPS. They also provide the SMS Texting system for real-time bus arrival times and the web-based Transit Account dashboard for Smart Card owners to manage their cards.

Routes, Stops & Passengers

Hours & Mileage

	2020	2021	2022
Vehicle Kilometres	22,221	321,373	353,644 ^a
Driver Hours	278	5,656	6,861

Notes:

- As of December 31, 2022.
- Years are calendar years.

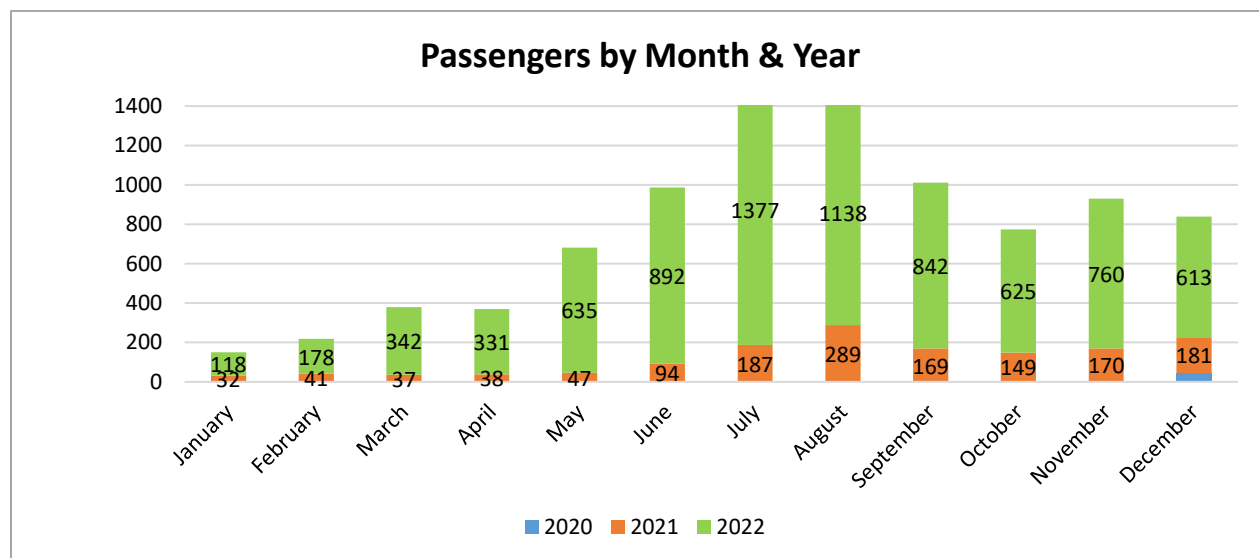
Most Frequented Bus Stops

Rank	Route 1	Route 2	Route 3	Route 4
1	Lambton Mall, Sarnia (1,694)	Masonville Mall, London (3,177)	Walmart, Goderich (77)	Walmart, Strathroy (68)
2	King St. @ Library, Forest (1,344)	Main St. S. & Sanders St., Exeter (435)	Hensall Library, Hensall (35)	Main St. & Ann St., Parkhill (58)
3	Points Plaza, KSPN (678)	Lucan Community Centre., Lucan (361)	Bayfield Town Hall, Bayfield (20)	Shops on Sydenham, Strathroy (53)
4	Walmart, Sarnia (605)	University Hospital London (312)	Municipal Office, Zurich (15)	Main St. & McLeod St., Parkhill (54)

Notes:

- Sobeys Plaza, Grand Bend bus stop is excluded from rankings because it is HSAT's "bus hub" with Route 1 and Route 2 buses arriving multiple times per day to enable passenger transfer between routes. On, Off and Transfer passengers at the Hub totalled 3,770.
- Numbers in brackets are the number of passengers serviced at the stop.

Passengers – 505% Increase Over 2021



Passenger Count:

- 2020 – 45 passengers
- 2021 – 1,553 passengers
- 2022 – 7,851 passengers (**505% increase over 2021**)

Trips & Payments

	2020	2021	2022 ^a	Projected 2023	Goal 2024
Passengers Trips	45	1,553	7,851	16,000	35,808
Smart Card Payments (number of)	N/A	N/A	1,254 ^b	11,200	17,904
Cash Payments (number of)	\$0.00 ^c	191	5,879	4,800	17,904
Wheelchair / Walker Passengers	1	5	72	100	200

Notes:

- Buses traveling from London to Grand Bend were filled to capacity on Fridays and weekends in July and August, necessitating two additional bus runs every Saturday and Sunday from mid-July to Labour Day.
- Promotion of Smart Cards began June 2022.
- When HSAT launched, passengers could ride for free for the first two months.
- Years are calendar years.

Digital & Web Footprint

Facebook

	2020	2021	2022
Page Reach ^a	15,249	57,637	135,827
Paid Reach ^b	N/A	N/A	67,653
Paid Impressions ^c	N/A	N/A	305,284
Page Visits	630	2,168	7,646
New Likes	134	315	569
Page Followers	N/A	1,120	1,174
Gender	N/A	N/A	80% women / 20% male
Age	N/A	N/A	66% age 35-64

Notes:

- Page Reach:** Number of people who saw content from or about the Page (posts, stories, ads, social information from people who interact with your Page). Reach may include multiple views of posts by the same people. This metric is estimated.
- Paid Reach:** Number of people who saw HSAT ads at least once. Reach may include multiple views of ads by the same people. This metric is estimated.
- Paid Impressions:** Number of times HSAT ads were displayed on a screen on any platform.
- Years are calendar years.

Google Adwords

	2020	2021	2022 ^a
Ad impressions	N/A	N/A	121,491
Clicks to Website	N/A	N/A	2,133

Notes:

- Adwords launched mid-July, 2022. Campaign length of about five months and continuing.
- Years are calendar years.

Google Business Profile

	2020	2021	2022 ^a
People Who Viewed Business Profile	N/A	N/A	3,587
Phone Calls Initiated from Profile	N/A	N/A	52
Clicks to Website from Profile	N/A	N/A	278
Direction Requests from Profile	N/A	N/A	457
Searches Displayed Business Profile	N/A	N/A	1,109

Notes:

- Google Business Profile launched August 2022. Profile in place now for five months.
- Years are calendar years.

Website

	2020 (Dec. Only)	2021	2022
Users Browsing	1,241	15,943	33,523
Pages Viewed	2,811	31,855	73,604
Visitors	80% New 20% Return	65% New 35% Return	66% New 34% Return
Device	60% Mobile 31% Desktop	58% Mobile 37% Desktop	67% Mobile 28% Desktop
Top Referring Websites	Facebook LFPress.com Twitter Windmill-Lake.ca Yahoo.com Google Mail	Facebook BlackburnNews.com Ride-SCT.ca VoyagoTransit.ca LambtonShores.ca Twitter	Facebook LambtonCollege.ca Ride-SCT.ca VoyagoTransit.ca Reddit.com BlackburnNews.com
Top Pages	Schedules, Routes & Maps Rates Covid-19 Precautions Accessibility	Schedules, Routes & Maps Rates Covid-19 Precautions Accessibility	Schedules, Routes & Maps Route 2: London ↔ Grand Bend Fares & Smart Cards

Notes:

- Years are calendar years

Selection of Passenger Testimonials

*I have been using Huron Shores Transit between London and Grand Bend since late summer. The service has allowed me to visit my mother without the need for a car! That I can have my bike on the bus is fantastic. I will be happy to be able to continue visiting my mom thru the winter months because of this amazing service. Good public transportation is valuable on many levels. For me, it's about independence and family connections. I am very grateful for this service and hope the funding continues indefinitely! **Barbara R.***

*I am with the Cheer support group in Arkona. Our members are getting better at using the bus and are really liking learning their new independence. **Connie B.***

*Huron Shores Area Transit is a fantastic organization making transportation accessible for various communities! I think it's fantastic that we have this resource to be able to travel over larger areas for an affordable price, and we're beyond lucky to have this resource. **Lily H.***

*The bus is super helpful. I love it! I don't drive and live in both London and Huron Park, so it makes it so much easier for me to get home to see family and work! Very thankful for the bus! **Lindsay R.***

*Perfect for Solo Travel! I used the HSAT for a solo trip to Grand Bend. The buses are comfortable with AC and fun music. Even on a very busy travel day, the staff was polite and calm towards all travellers. I recommend this service to anyone. I look forward to more frequent rides in the future. **Kayla P.***

*My daughter started using the bus service shortly after it started. We've been so pleased with all the services, and seriously you can't even go in town on a \$5.00 fee. What an amazing thing Huron Shores Area Transit does for people, knowing how some people really can't afford much. My daughter has always felt safe and comfortable riding on the bus. She's taken it to Sarnia several times and then to the Exeter area several times as well. If there's any issues, they solve it immediately. I've spoken with two different drivers at different times, and they've been very knowledgeable and great at their job. I've messaged the Facebook page, and their response back is right away. I'd recommend using these services. You get to where you want to go safely and securely and very cheap. Thank you HSAT for all you do. You are an amazing team. **Colleen E.***

Thank you HSAT for providing this service for our community to enjoy and explore our neighbouring areas. It is such a fun experience as well as an invaluable service to families and individuals with no access to transportation. **The Suvajac Family.**

My daughter loves your service to travel between Huron Park and London on a regular basis. **Larry R.**

This service is amazing! Without it my daughter, who isn't allowed to drive due to her vision, wouldn't have a way into London daily and home. This has allowed her to go in daily and feel more independent as she hates asking for rides. **Nicole S.**

I took the route three bus from Hensall to Goderich and back today to do some grocery shopping. The service was great! The two drivers were the nicest guys! And the bus was so nice and clean! I hope to continue using it as much as I can. Thanks for the wonderful ride! **Bob.**

Hi, just wanted to say, took a ride with HSAT from Grand Bend to Goderich and it was a very pleasant trip. The bus is comfortable and the driver is friendly and informative. I have recommended to several people if they are in need of transportation HSAT is a great place to look. I will definitely keep recommending this service and I am very impressed and will be utilizing the services for sure in the near future. Thanks for making this service available. **Melanie B.**

Thank you so much for the monthly pass! I hope to be able to go shopping and to the beach a few times next month! It is so nice to be able to have some public transportation in Huron County and Lambton County! **Holly M.**

We took the transit from Sarnia to Grand Bend and it was awesome! It was more cost-effective than driving, not to mention we got to avoid the hassle of finding a parking spot. We got to enjoy a full day on the beach without any worry! We were impressed by how easy it was to travel and the drivers were very friendly and welcoming. **Rebekah A.**

Huron Shores Area Transit was the perfect means of transport to get me from Lambton Shores to London in no time at all! Not being able to drive, I was worried I would be stranded, but Huron Shores Transit sorted me right out. My bus driver was so nice and even shared her chocolate peanuts with me. Thank you!!! **Lucca M.**

Development of Huron Shores Area Transit

2018 – We Need Transit

Over several years of economic development meetings, business stakeholders determined two major opportunities for rural community sustainability – public transit and attainable housing. Social agencies had been discussing challenges and opportunities in service to their clients, identifying public transit and affordable housing as factors that could positively affect the lives of their clients.

Business and social agency stakeholders came together to form **Huron Shores Transit Steering Committee** to determine the interest and support for public transit. Co-Chaired by Lorraine George¹ (then CEO of Kettle & Stony Point First Nation) and Glen Baillie (Past President, Grand Bend & Area Chamber of Commerce), the Committee secured a \$10k grant from Grand Bend Community Foundation to:

1. Research, prepare and conduct a feasibility study to assess the practicality of an affordable, cross-municipal, public transit system in Lambton Shores, South Huron, Bluewater, North Middlesex and Kettle & Stony Point First Nation
2. Gather statistics and data pertinent to the areas identified, and
3. Solicit engagement and commitment from the named municipalities.

The Municipality of Lambton Shores agreed to undertake the “municipal applicant” role on behalf of the named municipalities in the Ontario Community Transit Grant Program application.

LETTER OF SUPPORT

“A community transportation service would be beneficial to residents in the area who require access to transportation for medical appointments, employment, social interaction, shopping and groceries, recreation, and education. All age groups from students to seniors have identified a need for public transportation in a survey conducted in January 2018.

Additionally, having lead the Perth-Huron Transportation Task Force for more than 5 years, United Way can attest that transportation is one of the most critical issues facing rural Ontario.

Lacking public access to services, employment and social engagements, even connections to larger urban centres, is an impediment to community and economic development.”

Ryan Erb, Executive Director,
United Way Perth-Huron

¹ Lorraine George brought more than 25 years of direct public transit experience to the Committee. As Director of Transit for the City of Sarnia from 1971 – 1996, she was directly responsible for the management and operation of the City's Public Transit system.

2019 – We Can Afford Transit

In January 2019, the Community Transit Grant Program (CTProgram) awarded Lambton Shores \$1.5 million for transit between our region’s communities and \$500,000 for local transit initiatives. In July, Lambton Shores agreed to be responsible for the CTProgram grant funds and to award the RFP for a feasibility study to Transit Consulting Network. Since the regional component of the transit initiative involved neighbouring municipalities, Steering Committee members presented the concept to their councils. In December, Transit Consulting Network submitted the feasibility study that recommended:

1. The formation of a Transit Advisory Committee.
2. Identifying a transit service provider to operate local and long-distance public transit and to provide the vehicles, and
3. To begin service implementation by May 2020.

Part of the Feasibility Study’s research was to determine the sustainability of the transit system when it graduates from the grant provided by the CTProgram to fund received from Ontario’s Gas Tax Fund in 2025. The Fund makes two calculations: one to determine how much a transit system may qualify for, and a second to determine the maximum amount a transit system will receive. The first calculation is based on population (pays \$8.44 per resident) and ridership (pays \$0.30 per trip). The actual amount received is based on 75% of a transit system’s total revenues.

Municipally-shared ridership and population (2021 census: 37,149 residents²) are crucial factors in determining the maximum potential funding for which we could qualify.

The maximum potential funding the Gas Tax Fund could provide is \$324,279 (37,149 residents x \$8.44 + 35,808 trips x \$0.30). Based on HSAT’s expected farebox and advertising revenue, the actual amount we would receive from the Gas Tax Fund is 75% of \$339,740 or \$254,805.

Subtracting Gas Tax Fund support and HSAT’s revenues from operational expenses results in a net amount of \$130,800³, which is the estimated ongoing shared service cost to the municipalities on an annual basis. This shared cost represents a net investment of \$3.52 per capita⁴ (total population), a figure well below the \$19.85 per capita that is the provincial average of municipalities with less than 50,000 population. To put this capita figure into perspective, crossing guards cost \$3.21 per capita.

² **2021 Census:** Lambton Shores – 11,876 residents; Kettle & Stony Point FN – 1,363 on-site residents; South Huron – 10,063 residents; Bluewater – 7,540 residents; North Middlesex – 6,307 residents. The 2016 census combined population used by the consultants was 35,000. The region has seen an increase in population of 2,149 people.

³ **Net Annual Cost:** \$130,800 shared across all partners based on population: Lambton Shores - \$41,856; Kettle & Stony Point FN - \$5,232; South Huron - \$35,316; Bluewater - \$26,160; North Middlesex - \$6,307.

⁴ **Per Capita Comparison of Costs** (Lambton Shores 2021 budget figures): Libraries - \$1.59 per capita, Crossing Guards - \$3.21 per capita, Street Lights - \$9.29 per capita, Harbours - \$11.75 per capita, Parks - \$40 per capita.

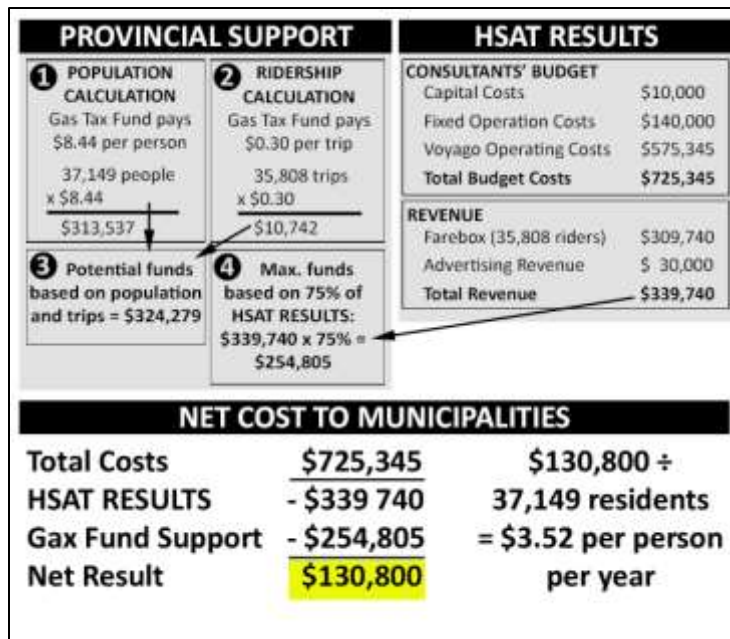


Figure 1 Shows how Gas Tax Funding is calculated for ongoing support beginning 2025 and beyond.

2020 – Build It, And They Will Come

During 2020, Lambton Shores hired a Transit Coordinator and continued to use the expertise of Transit Consulting Network to build the system, this included:

- Finalizing what transit services to implement, determining routes, fares, and bus stop locations.
- Developing and undertaking an RFP for a transit service provider.
- Finalizing the service provider agreement and obtaining a Public Vehicle Licence.
- Setting the terms of reference for a transit advisory committee.
- Marketing and branding the service.

Covid-19 shutdowns, state-of-emergency conditions, and stay-at-home orders (March, April, June, July, and Fall) affected timelines. Instead of launching at the beginning of May, Huron Shores Area Transit launched on December 14, 2020.

Marketing the service consisted of a few radio interviews, press releases, and a website. In the last two weeks of December 2020, HSAT served 45 passengers.

2021 – Ride The Bus; Stay At Home!

Instead of a first full year of transit service, 2021 was severely affected by Covid-19 shutdowns, stay-at-home orders, and even the "Roadmap to Reopen Plan" continued to reduce our ability to build a transit service and ridership.

Based on ridership patterns at that time, to make the system more efficient and increase ridership, routes were rejigged, unused bus stop locations were removed, the long-distance fare was reduced from \$10 to \$5, and children aged 12 and under travelled free.

Marketing included a brochure, some print advertising in local newspapers and a hospital directory and Facebook posts.

In 2021, HSAT served 1,553 passengers. Most trips were taken in the latter part of the year.

2022 – Getting On Track

Although Year 5 of the pilot project, **2022 is the first full year of transit operations.** Final route adjustments took effect in March 2022, adding Goderich to Route 3 and Strathroy to Route 4.

Adding Strathroy enables passengers to connect with Strathroy-Caradoc Transit, opening up additional destinations (we already provided connection to Sarnia and London transit). Connecting with neighbouring transit systems is part of our commitment to inter-community transit within the Southwest Community Transit Association and to the province's Community Transit Program's stated goal of inter-community transit.⁵

An updated brochure with revised routes and schedules was mailed to all households in Lambton Shores, South Huron, Bluewater, and North Middlesex in July and August.

In July, substantial marketing and communications efforts were undertaken to connect with passengers and promote HSAT. We can now immediately communicate service interruptions by email, SMS texting, web alerts, social media and mobile transit apps (Google Transit and Transit App).

Promotional efforts included branding, marketing, merchandising and outreach. Campaign visuals and key messages were developed for use across media platforms for the remainder of 2022 and throughout 2023 for a consistent approach to targeted audiences. The delivery of campaign messages includes the vehicle wrap of both buses, social media and web ads, billboards, electronic boards, and print advertising. Point-of-sale and point-of-pickup merchandising of the Smart Cards provides a branded countertop display stand with branded Smart Card packages at libraries, stores, colleges and other locations. Pickup locations receive a window cling identifying them as a Smart Card outlet. Outreach activities included participation

⁵ SCT is an association of member municipal transit systems working together with the South Central Ontario Region Economic Development Corporation (SCOR EDC). Together we look for opportunities to share best practices and potential operating efficiencies, make transit connections between our systems and collaborate on an integrated customer experience. We also present a unified voice to the Province of Ontario and other key stakeholders with regards to long-term sustainability of inter-community public transportation service in southwest Ontario.

in Four Winds Community Employment Open House at Kettle & Stony Point First Nation and Orientation Day at Lambton College.

Passenger-centric infrastructure improvements include bus stop numbers and QR codes on bus stop signs to make it easier and quicker to access key rider information. By texting our agency's ID - "HSAT" - and the bus stop number to 8887433472 (888-RIDE-HSAT), passengers receive real-time bus arrival information for a specific bus stop by text to their mobile phone.

Based on passenger feedback and usage, several changes were made to bus stops. Three new stops were added, one at Army Camp Road, one in Centralia and one at McDonald's, Exeter. The St. Joseph bus stop was re-implemented.

2023 – Reaching Goals

According to the Feasibility Study, ridership in 2025 is estimated to reach 35,808 passenger trips as we "graduate" from the Community Transportation Grant to Gas Tax Funding. Our **ridership goal for 2023 is 16,000 passenger trips.**

We will achieve this through **consistent and ongoing marketing** efforts to increase awareness of HSAT and reinforce its convenience and affordability.

We will continue to be passenger-centric by **evaluating bus stop locations** and tweaking as necessary, **installing bus shelters**, and **ensuring reliable service.**

We will increase revenue through increased ridership and the reinstatement of the \$10 fare for long-distance travel. Bus shelters and on-bus advertising panels will make **generating advertising revenue** possible.

2023 Goals Summary

1. Double ridership to 16,000 passenger trips.
2. Full-year marketing campaign using traditional, outdoor, web and digital media.
3. Install transit shelters prioritizing the most used bus stops.
4. Increase revenue through fare increase, ridership and advertising.

Ontario Gas Tax Fund

Every consumer who buys gas pays fuel tax. In 2021, the Fund provided \$375 million to 109 municipalities in Ontario.

Municipalities that support public transit receive two cents per litre of provincial gas tax revenue.

Funding can be used to extend service hours, buy transit vehicles, add routes, improve accessibility or upgrade infrastructure.

State of the Ontario Tourism Industry Report

By Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, Dec. 13, 2022

"Expand the Community Transportation Grant Program to encourage and specifically support municipal collaboration."

"Enable better transit and transportation integration across Ontario, with an emphasis on enabling infrastructure in rural destinations for tourism."