



# HURON SHORES AREA TRANSIT ANNUAL REPORT 2023

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Municipality of Lambton Shores

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

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## ABOUT HURON SHORES AREA TRANSIT

Launched December 2020, Huron Shores Area Transit (HSAT) operates an inter-community public transit service linking Lambton Shores, South Huron, North Middlesex, Bluewater and Kettle & Stony Point First Nation with each other and Sarnia, London, Goderich and Strathroy. The fully accessible service is made possible by a \$3-million grant from the Government of Ontario Community Transportation Grant Program and provides an important regional, accessible, convenient and affordable transit service for seniors, students, workers and youth for employment, education, health and wellness, and leisure.

Collectively, the service area has a population of 37,686 (2021 Census) and covers 1,519.5 km<sup>2</sup> (687.5 sq. mi.). The geographical area served is more than twice the size of the City of Toronto (630.2 km<sup>2</sup> / 243.3 sq mi), with just two 20-person buses and four fixed-route bus routes. Each bus can accommodate two wheelchairs and two bikes.



## MISSION & VISION

HSAT provides access to community life and assets for all residents and in doing so contributes to the economic development, sustainability and vibrancy of our communities.


HSAT improves community residents' access, equity, and mobility to community assets, such as employment, education, medical, social, retail, recreational and natural.

HSAT supports community livability and economic prosperity by enabling and increasing connections between residents and businesses, employment, skills training/education and thereby reduces the outmigration of residents and the local labour pool.

## 2023 OVERVIEW

### 2023 Goals Recap

- ✓ Double ridership to 16,000 passenger trips. Goal exceeded.
- ✓ Full year marketing campaign using traditional, outdoor, web and digital media. Goal completed.
- ✓ Increase revenue through fare increase, ridership and advertising. Revenue increased, but short of goal.

 Install transit shelters at prioritized bus stops. Goal not complete; *in process*.

### Ridership Growth – Goal & Challenge

HSAT's biggest success is its biggest challenge – ridership growth. While ridership has doubled, the cost to accommodate that growth has used additional financial resources necessitating reduction of complimentary activities, such as marketing.

Similar to 2022, a Summer Bus was added to Route 2 from London to Sobeys Plaza on Saturdays and Sundays, July 1 to September 3, to accommodate the seasonal boost in beach visitors. Four return trips from 9:30 am to 9:30 pm offered cash-only trips.

At the beginning of July, Route 1 ridership increased such that the morning bus left Sarnia full. Lambton College students hired to fill seasonal positions in local businesses filled the bus before it left Sarnia. Local businesses that hired these students included Forest Foodland, Arkona Home Hardware, MacPherson's and Grog's in Port Franks, in Grand Bend Mike & Terri's NoFrills, The Big Kahuna, Oakwood Resort, Colonial Hotel, Sobeys, and McDonalds, and in Exeter Wendy's, McDonalds, The Independent, and Libro.

Working with a local taxi company, flyers promoting "employee shuttles" were distributed to the college students. Within a week, a registry of student names and Smart Card Monthly Passes were used to organize pre-booked employee shuttles. Within another week, the taxi was completing double runs to accommodate the increase in student workers. Beginning in August, two micro buses with a capacity of eight passengers per bus were hired from Lambton Elderly



Outreach (LEO) to run Thursday to Sunday shuttles, with the taxi company providing overflow shuttles as needed. Employee shuttles continued into September transitioning to weekends only in October and November.

The taxi / LEO combination was more budget-friendly than Voyago's offered solution (transportation contractor). Voyago stated they would need to purchase a new bus and hire an additional driver and that this required a long-term commitment to the operation of the bus. This meant we would have to operate the extra bus year round regardless of ridership demand at a cost of \$1,300 per day plus fuel. On the up side of this arrangement, we would have a third bus that could provide greater flexibility to build ridership by adding a return trip to another route or on-demand service, however the budget could not accommodate this more expensive, proactive and perhaps more permanent option.

The taxi / LEO option cost approximately \$32k, whereas Voyago would have cost upwards of \$118k.

### Emerging Trend – Ridership Consistency

More consistent month-to-month ridership compared to previous years is the trend. Ridership did not drop-off to mirror the area's reduced activity in the fall and winter months. Ridership consistency likely indicates passenger reliance on the transit system for everyday travel needs regardless of the season.

### Higher Costs - Increased Budget Pressure

In addition to extra transportation expenses for the summer bus and employee shuttles, the contract with Voyago was renewed on April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2025. The rate increased on renewal from \$67.98 to \$75.16 per hour. Based on drivers' hours, this represents an annual increase of \$52,866.

### Grant Applications

In August, the CT-Program announced they would accept applications in September for "top up" funding,

## 2023 SUMMARY

### CORPORATE, ADMINISTRATIVE & HSAT POLICIES UPDATED

- Advertising Policy.
- Passenger Courtesy, Conduct & Safety Policy.
- Video Surveillance Policy.

### FARES & REVENUE

- Reinstated \$10 long-distance fare.
- Launched Agency Day Pass.
- Price increase for Monthly Pass announced (in effect Feb. 2024).
- Advertising Kit distributed.

### RIDERSHIP

- 20,066 trips.
- Employee Shuttles (Route 1).
- Summer Bus (Route 2).

### INFRASTRUCTURE & EQUIPMENT

- Security Cameras installed.
- Purchased eight used bus shelters. Bus shelter refurbishment and installation underway.

### ROUTES, STOPS & SCHEDULES

- Route 4 extension of service hours & additional bus stop.
- Flex Stop (LTC #1820EB).

### OUTREACH / CONFERENCES / PRESENTATIONS

- Ontario Transit Expo (Apr.).
- Bluewater Good Neighbours (Apr.).
- Age Friendly Expo (Jun.).
- Discover North Middlesex (Jun.).
- Ailsa Craig Seniors Group (Nov.).
- Lambton County Council (Nov.).
- Huron County Economic Development Mtg. (Nov.).

### MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

- 2023 Brochure mail drop.
- Advertising – Billboards, Specialty Magazine, Radio, Newspaper, Social media, Web.
- Press Releases (10).

as all the pilot and grant supported rural transit systems experienced similar cost increases. HSAT submitted grant applications for local and long-distance support totaling \$318,168. The additional funding will support the maintenance of current service levels and hours, forecasted ridership, bus stop infrastructure and marketing. On February 1, 2024 we received notification the full amount of our request was granted.

In September, HSAT also submitted a Federal Rural Transit Solutions Fund application (RTSF – Capital Stream) for \$374,336 to support the purchase and installation of 11 bus shelters with integrated benches and solar-powered lighting, benches and solar-powered lighting for an additional eight bus shelters, nine stand-alone benches and 21 bike racks for improved public satisfaction, mobility and safety as part of a ridership growth strategy. The bus shelters and associated street furniture will provide additional opportunities for advertising and sponsorship, contributing to HSAT’s advertising revenue goal. Awaiting RTSF grant decision.

### **New Product – Responding to Needs**

An Agency Day Pass was developed in response to inquiries from several social agencies. Many agencies assist clients with transportation costs to and from appointments, including job interviews and assessments. The Agency Day Pass is purchased by the agency for \$10 and provides unlimited same-day travel for a client. This pass provides a potential 50% in savings. HSAT sold 668 Agency Passes (\$6,680) to the Canadian Mental Health Association, Indwell, VON Community Support Services, and Bluewater Health.

### **Other**

**Policies & Practices:** In early 2023, violent crime on the TTC (Toronto Transit Commission) became the subject of media attention and questions arose as to what safeguards were in place to protect HSAT passengers. Although we had not experienced any violent incidents, as a proactive measure, a “Passenger Courtesy, Conduct & Safety Policy” was developed (published in the brochure, website and social media), and security cameras installed to monitor the passenger area. Before the security cameras could be used, the municipality’s corporate video surveillance policy (CP-CL-POL-005) was updated to cover video and sound recording on the buses. Warning statements advising passengers of the surveillance are displayed on the buses, as is the customer courtesy policy.

**Advertising Revenue:** HSAT’s Advertising Kit was distributed to local businesses in July. Before the distribution, the municipal administrative advertising policy (AD-CL-POL-018) was updated to cover acceptable bus advertising content.

**Route Updates:** In response to requests for changes to Route 4 that would provide a bus stop on the east side of Ailsa Craig and a schedule to provide more time in Grand Bend and Strathroy, a new bus stop near the entrance to Craigwiell Gardens Seniors’ Apartments was implemented and service hours extended to 9:54 pm (three return trips between Grand Bend and Strathroy), giving passengers up to eight hours in Strathroy and six hours in Grand Bend.

### HSAT Comparison with SCT Rural Transit Systems

HSAT is a member of Southwest Community Transit (SCT / ride-sct.ca), an association of member municipalities and non-profit organizations in Southwest Ontario with rural transit systems. Working together with the South Central Ontario Region Economic Development Corporation (SCOR EDC), transit members seek to increase travel connections between under-served areas, rural communities and urban cities.

Feedback from SCT members indicates ridership increased substantially across all systems; in many cases, ridership doubled. With increased ridership came increased revenue, although, for those with revenue goals, revenue fell short of projected. During the August 2023 SCT meeting, all members expressed concern that operations costs had increased to the point that service would need to be reduced without top-up grant amounts. SCT members were also split as to whether they believe they will be able to transition to Gas Tax Funding at the end of the pilot project in 2025. MTO staff who attended the August SCT meeting stated there was a likelihood small rural transit systems would be treated differently than larger urban systems with adjustments made to the Gas Tax Funding formula to recognize rural realities.

## 2023 PERFORMANCE MEASURES & RESULTS

### RIDERSHIP – Goal Exceeded

#### Ridership Results

- 20,066 trips/boardings.
- Route 1 (Sarnia to Grand Bend) is the busiest; 12,727 trips.
- Average Monthly Ridership: 1,672.
- 53% of trips are local; 47% are long-distance<sup>1</sup>.



#### Summer Bus

- **20 Days of Operation:** July and August weekends, July 1 to September 3.
- **80 Round Trips:** Four round trips daily, operating 9:30 am to 9:30 pm.
- **\$5,600 of Farebox Revenue:** 560 passengers x \$10.
- **\$6,744 Net Cost:** \$12,174 expense minus farebox revenue. With additional passengers, the Summer Bus has the potential to be expense neutral.

#### Employee Shuttle

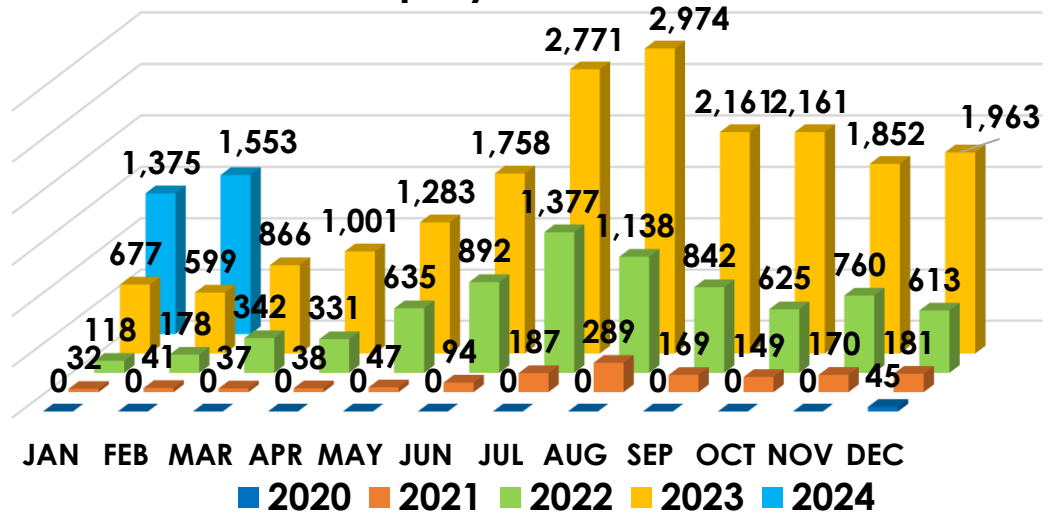
- Student workers with valid monthly passes registered for employee shuttles.

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<sup>1</sup> Feasibility Study estimated 73% of trips would be long-distance with a \$10 average fare, and 27% of trips local with a \$5 average fare.

- Shuttles began July 29; ran August and September, Thursday to Sunday; October to November, weekends only.
- 112 Employee Shuttles / 529 individual employee trips.

### Ridership by Year and Month



## FINANCIAL

### Revenue

Calendar Year	Actual				Projected	Goal
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Gas Tax Fund	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$328,812 <sup>a</sup>
Grant Funding <sup>b</sup>	140,175	\$657,420	\$739,224	\$817,677	\$846,942	N/A
Farebox	\$2,039	\$12,944	\$50,525	\$106,583 <sup>c</sup>	\$169,972 <sup>d</sup>	\$236,948 <sup>e</sup>
Advertising	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,042	\$20,000	\$50,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$142,214</b>	<b>\$670,364</b>	<b>\$789,749</b>	<b>\$925,302</b>	<b>\$1,036,914</b>	<b>\$688,552</b>

#### Notes:

- Gas Tax Fund:** based on *ridership* (35,808\*\$0.30=\$10,742) + *population* (37,686\*\$8.44=\$328,812).
- Rural Community Transportation Grant:** \$3,065,946 + “top up” \$318,168 = \$3,384,114.
- Farebox:** 2023 revenue \$6,217 below goal (i.e. \$112,800). First quarter 2023, all trips were \$5 before the reinstatement of \$10 long-distance fares on April 1. The \$5 fare and \$50 monthly pass account for the majority of the revenue gap between actual and goal. Lost revenue due to the \$5 fare was \$4,709. Monthly Pass Smart Cards (\$60) provided users with a 60% fare discount with the average fare being \$3.09. Cash fare average is \$7.35. The Feasibility Study did not anticipate the impact on the average fare a discounted monthly pass might have. Monthly passes account for 32% of all trip payments (cash trips = 64%).
- Overall Average Fare:** Based on 32,000 trips x \$5.31 average fare<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Average fare: Based on 2023 revenue (\$106,583) divided by total trips (20,066).



- e. **Farebox Goal:** Feasibility Study’s estimate based on 35,808 trips using \$8.65 average fare. Figure shown is based on 2023 actual trip types, payment types and average fares which provide a lower overall average fare.

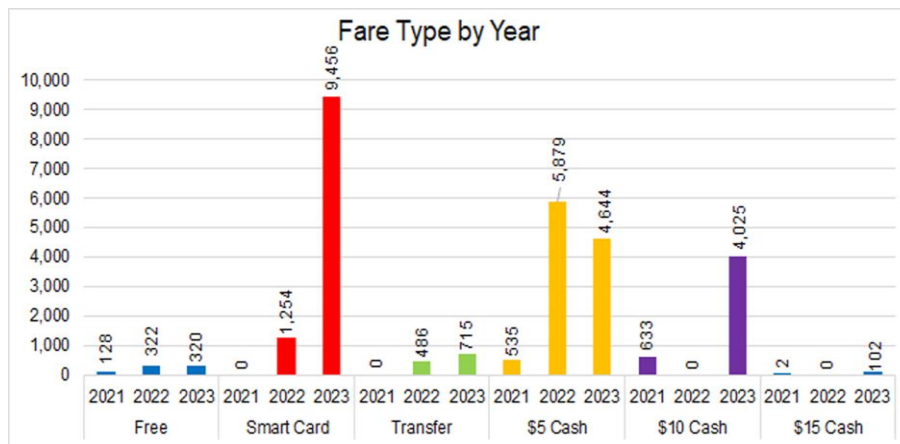
**Expenses (Operational <sup>a</sup>)**

Calendar Year	Actual				Projected	
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Voyago	\$18,519	\$388,841	\$475,488	\$536,317 <sup>d</sup>	\$559,810	\$559,810
Fuel Cost	\$4,450	\$81,023	\$128,320	\$144,660	\$144,804	\$144,949
Taxi / LEO <sup>b</sup>	N/A	N/A	\$568	\$33,425	\$33,425	\$33,425
Transit Fare <sup>c</sup>	N/A	\$67,490	\$12,091	\$20,822	\$20,822	\$20,822
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$22,969</b>	<b>\$537,354</b>	<b>\$616,467</b>	<b>\$724,752</b>	<b>\$758,861</b>	<b>\$759,006</b>

**Notes:**

- a. **Expenses:** not listed: marketing/advertising, supplies, administrative costs (cell phone, web hosting and software subscriptions, memberships, conference/mileage etc.), staff costs.
- b. **Taxi/LEO:** Local taxi used in “stranded passenger <sup>3</sup>” situations. Combination of taxi and Lambton Elderly Outreach vehicles used to provide employee shuttles.
- c. **Transit Fare:** Point-of-Sale system, interactive map / GPS bus tracking system, GTFS data feed to Google Maps (submits HSAT data to Google’s “Directions” function), SMS Texting system, web-based Admin Dashboard, web-based Customer dashboard, and Smart Cards. POS hardware purchase and annual system hosting services.
- d. **Voyago:** As of April 1, 2023, hourly rate \$75.16. Rate in place to March 31, 2025.

**Payment Type – Smart Cards Surpass Cash Payments**



- Smart Card usage increased 654% over 2022
- 32% of trips paid with Smart Card
- 91% of Smart Cards are Monthly Passes
- Average Monthly Pass trip is \$3.09
- Monthly Pass price increases to \$80 on February 1, 2024

<sup>3</sup> Stranded Passenger: Cannot return home or complete travel with HSAT due to broken down bus, weather, lack of driver, or bus full.

## SERVICE QUALITY

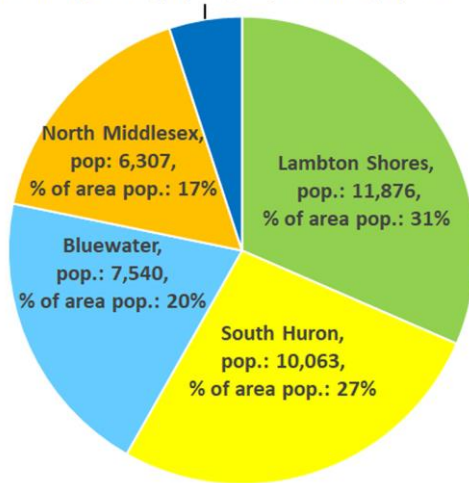
### Service Area Demographics

HSAT targets several key segments within its market, including the trailing edge of the Millennials (born 1980-1994; 29-43 years old) and the leading edge of Gen Z (born 1995-2012; 11-28 years old) for education, employment and leisure activities, families with young children for shopping and leisure, and seniors (age 65+) for appointments, errands and groceries.

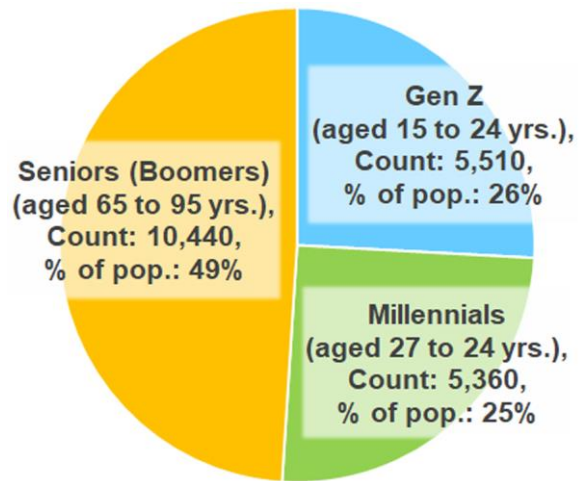
#### Population Count & Percentage

(2021 Census)

Kettle & Stony Pt. FN, pop.: 1,900, % of area pop: 5%



#### Groups, Ages, Counts & Percentages



### Route Performance

Route 1 (Sarnia to Grand Bend) is the most consistently on time of the four routes. Route 3 (Grand Bend to Goderich) would appear to need improvement, although drivers' feedback is the schedule – time allotted to the route - is very tight for the number of stops and distance travelled.

**System Average:** Buses run on time 72% of the time.

### Revenue Hours & Mileage

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Vehicle Kilometres	22,221	321,373	330,781	503,561
Revenue Hours	278	5,720	6,927	7,303
Trips Completed	0	1,769	3,581	3,979

#### Notes:

- **Revenue Hours:** Time a vehicle is available to the general public and there is an expectation of carrying passengers. Includes bus transit time, layover time and passenger boarding time.
- **Revenue KM:** Number of kilometres a bus travels when available to the general public (i.e. does not include mileage from depot to route start).
- **Trips:** Number of “return trips”.

### Lost Runs & Missed Trips

Measurement refers to the total number of trips lost from the schedule due to mechanical breakdowns and weather.

Completed Trips		Time in Operation		Mechanical Breakdown Lost Runs		Weather Related Lost Runs	
2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023
3,581	3,979	98%	98%	40	22	5.75	21

### Shelters & Benches

HSAT purchased eight used shelters but was unable to take delivery until September. The used shelters need some refurbishment (sanding/painting/removal of stickers and graffiti) before they can be installed. Three concrete pads have been laid, and refurbishment of the shelters is underway.

## MARKETING

### Brochure

Changes to Route 4’s bus stops and schedule necessitated a brochure reprint. Mail drop to all households, apartments and farms (distributed 1,937 brochures) in North Middlesex completed November 2023.

### Social Media

#### FACEBOOK

Calendar Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2022 vs 2023 Difference <sup>a</sup>
Page Reach	15,249	57,637	135,827	75,250	Down 44%
Paid Reach	N/A	N/A	67,653	62,625	Down 7%
Paid Impressions	N/A	N/A	305,284	239,035	Down 22%
Page Visits	630	2,168	7,646	14,689	Up 92.5%
Likes	N/A	N/A	1,159	1,159	No Change
New Likes	134	315	569	170	Down 70%
Page Followers	N/A	1,120	1,174	1,433	Up 122%
Engagement Rate	0%	0%	5%	7%	Up 2%
Gender	N/A	N/A	80% women / 20% male	79.8% women / 20.2% men	79.8% women / 20.2% men
Age	N/A	N/A	20% age 18-34 64% age 35-64 16% age 65+	21% age 18-34 63% age 35-64 16% age 65+	1% increase 18-24 1% decrease 35-64

#### Notes:

- **N/A:** No data for this time period for this measurement.

## SET YOURSELF FREE WITH HURON SHORES AREA TRANSIT

- a. **Difference:** According to Facebook, HSAT’s Reach and Impressions (paid or organic) increase 182% when actively advertising. Due to budget restraints, 2023 advertising was reduced overall by 26%. On a monthly average basis this represents a 69% spending decrease (2022: 5 months of advertising for \$1,644; 2023: 12 months of advertising for \$1,225). Although rate of “new likes” is down, number of Page Followers increased and Page Visits increased substantially. **Interpretation:** those who follow the HSAT page rely on the information and visit repeatedly (committed following).

### Definitions:

- **Page Reach:** Number of people who saw content from/about Page (posts, ads, social information from people who interact with Page).
- **Paid Reach:** Number of people who saw HSAT ads. May include multiple views of same ad.
- **Paid Impressions:** Number of times HSAT ads displayed on a screen on any platform.
- **Page Visits:** Number of people who visited the Page.
- **Likes:** Visitors committed to receiving content from Page.
- **New Likes:** New visitors who click “Like”.
- **Page Followers:** People regularly receiving content from Page.
- **Engagement Rate:** Any action taken by a visitor/follower on a Page or Post (i.e. likes, comments, shares, link click). “Good” engagement rate is 1% to 5%.

### Google Adwords

Calendar Year	2022	2023	Difference <sup>a</sup>
Ad impressions <sup>b</sup>	121,491	57,500	Down 53%
Clicks to Website	2,135	6,902	Up 223%
Campaigns	#RideHSAT Free Yourself ... People's Schedules	Free Yourself ... People's Schedules Free Yourself For Opportunity Ride Route 4 for Free November 14	
Ad Spend	\$1,451	\$1,164	Down \$287

### Notes:

- a. **Difference:** launched mid-July, 2022. 2022 campaign length 5 months vs. 2023 12 months.
- b. **Ad impressions:** decreased primarily related to reduction in ad spend. Interaction with viewed ads increased significantly. **Interpretation:** ads more engaging and attracting increased clicks; improved targeting. Ads relevant to the audience being reached and leading to meaningful interactions or conversions.

## Website

Web Analytics <sup>a</sup>	2020 (Dec. Only)	2021	2022	2023
Unique Visitors	5,094	15,943	38,697	47,543
Visits	8,142	33,553	68,345	81,344
Pages Viewed	2,811	31,855	73,604	57,243
Visitors	80% New 20% Return	65% New 35% Return	66% New 34% Return	N/A <sup>b</sup>
Average Visit Duration	3.65 minutes	4 minutes	4 minutes	4 minutes
Device	60% Mobile 31% Desktop	58% Mobile 37% Desktop	67% Mobile 28% Desktop	73% Mobile 25% 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	Facebook LambtonCollege.ca Sarnia CBC Voyago Ride-SCT.ca
Top Pages <sup>c</sup>	1. Schedules, Routes & Maps 2. Rates 3. Covid-19 Precautions 4. Accessibility	1. Schedules, Routes & Maps 2. Rates 3. Covid-19 Precautions 4. Accessibility	1. Schedules, Routes & Maps 2. Rates 3. Route 2: London ↔ Grand Bend 3. Route 1: Sarnia ↔ Grand Bend 4. Contact Us	1. Schedules, Routes & Maps 2. Route 2: London ↔ Grand Bend 3. Route 1: Sarnia ↔ Grand Bend 4. Rates

### Notes:

- Web Analytics:** On July 1, 2023, Google Analytics replaced “Universal Analytics” with “Google Analytics 4”. As a result, Universal Analytics stopped processing web traffic. Customers were forced to setup a Google Analytics 4 property. To avoid losing access to the University Analytics data, customers had to migrate data into the new format. HSAT Universal Analytics data didn’t survive the migration. Statistics for 2023 were retrieved from the website’s hosting server (Hay Communications). Data for “pages viewed” and “New vs Returning Visitors” are unavailable.
- Visitors:** All visitors categorized as new since July 1, 2023, when Google Analytics 4 came into place.
- Top Pages:** only six months of data available due to data loss.



## TESTIMONIALS

### *Todd Vodden, Sobeys #4739, Grand Bend*

Good Morning Susan, thank you for this opportunity as we are extremely grateful for the Bus service that is available.

Currently, we have a 12 International Students that live in Sarnia and work in our store. We have been able to work their shifts with the bus schedule including staff that come for a night shift (9pm - 6am), granted there is some wait time on the beginning or the end of their shifts, but for the most part it works.

Without these individuals we would have difficulty staffing our store. They are a most welcome addition to our team. Attendance is excellent also due to the fact the bus schedule is consistent.

I receive approximately 3-4 resumes weekly from Lambton College International students looking for work. With summer approaching I'm sure you can appreciate that we will be increasing our Team here at Grand Bend Sobeys and will continue to look to these individuals to add to our staffing compliment.

Also effective April 1st 2024 these students are eligible to increase their work hours to 30/week instead of the 20 so we would be able to offer more hours to them as well.

I'm not sure if the bus schedule times would be changing in the summer but if you are looking for input we typically close at 10 and if there was an opportunity to have last pick up at 9 pm instead of 8pm that would be very beneficial to both Sobeys, and our Team members using this service.

### *Rob Reid, McDonald's Owner Operator*

I am writing to express our sincere appreciation for the invaluable service provided by the Huron Shores Area Transit. This local transit system has played a crucial role in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of our businesses in Grand Bend and Exeter.

The availability of cost-effective transportation has been instrumental in our ability to hire and train staff from outside the local communities. This service has facilitated the seamless integration of employees into our businesses, ultimately contributing to the success of our operations.

Without a doubt, we intend to continue utilizing the Huron Shores Area Transit for many years to come. It has become an indispensable resource, bridging the gap in employment and enabling us to attract and retain a skilled workforce that greatly contributes to the growth of our businesses.

Thank you for your continued support of this vital transit service, and we look forward to its sustained presence in our community.

***Ongoing Living & Learning Inc., Connie Burns, Arkona***

Ongoing Living & Learning Inc. is an NPO operating across the road from Rock Glen Falls in Arkona. We run a daily recreation and leisure program for young adults with intellectual disabilities. Throughout the summer our support workers have worked with these community members to help them learn how to safely ride public transit. They are absolutely loving the independence the HSAT has given them as have their aging caregivers! We have several who ride the bus to Arkona from Forest and a couple coming to Arkona from Grand Bend. In the summertime, we even had a couple who learned to load up their bicycles so they could go to Grand Bend for a ride and visit friends.

Living with a disability that restricts you from ever owning a driver's license limits your life in so many ways, especially if you live in a rural area which normally has no other means of transportation than a personal vehicle. There are cabs and special buses like LEO, but on the very limited income of ODSP, these means of travel are restricted to "emergency only" for our group. The HSAT has made participating in the recreation and leisure program possible for so many.

All of our people who ride the bus have told us how friendly and kind your drivers have been. Some of us move slowly and sometimes we don't quite understand the instructions so we are very grateful for the patience your drivers have shown us.

If we could have one change...a bus stop on Rock Glen Road at Rock Glen Falls Conservation would make our travels perfect! Walking from the Arkona bus stop to Rock Glen is doable but dangerous given that there are no sidewalks and safe sight of traffic is very limited on the curvy and hilly road.

Thank you for providing this much needed service. We hope it continues and grows.

***Holly M., Exeter***

We weren't always able to afford a vehicle and the transit system allowed me to get to doctor's appointments, to go shopping (we live in Exeter...I could get to London), and to take my niece out for outings to the beach in the summer! It is needed! Especially since our population is getting older and for many people, money is getting very tight! I don't know what I would have done without you guys!

***Christopher M., St. Thomas***

I am grateful for this service! I can get from London to Goderich for a reasonable rate to visit my Senior Citizen Mother. Neither of us drives, so it is a blessing to have Huron Shores Area Transit as an option to get together.

***Wayne S., Grand Bend***

Coming to Grand Bend is awesome. We have a nephew that has no car and uses the transit a lot to come and visit us in Grand Bend. Thanks.

**Janice L., Forest**

The bus saved my son several trips from Forest to Sarnia when I was unable due to shopping or visiting a friend. It's really convenient.

**Lisa F., Forest**

I wanted to share with you what a great transportation system you have in place and how it has positively impacted my family's life.

My son Matthew is 27, has autism and an intellectual disability. He attends a wonderful day program in Arkona (Cheer) and catches the HSAT bus at the Forest Library.

Taking the bus may be something folks in urban centres can take for granted, but in our community it has been a huge benefit. For Matthew, it is an important life skill that has greatly improved his independence.

Your service is excellent. Your drivers are always friendly and courteous.

We are so grateful for HSAT and hope it continues.

**Annie W., London**

I live in London. I do not drive and I have three new clients in the Grand Bend/Pinery area. I do professional full time live in house sitting, and dog and cat care when clients are away for holiday, work, or family needs. Taking your bus from London to Grand Bend is very convenient for me. Your driver is excellent. It is an important service you are performing. Many older people and those with disabilities or health issues cannot or do not wish to drive and rely on your service. I am so appreciative, and will be using it more often. Your bus schedule also makes it more likely I will be able take on clients in the other towns you serve.

**Emma M., Sarnia**

Throughout the past year, the Huron Shores Area Transit bus has helped me immensely to travel quickly through Lambton Shores. It has helped me to visit friends, go shopping and get to work and school on time. Without it, I would have almost no way to get around. The bus has always been on time and whenever interruptions occur, I can always check the Huron Shores Area Transit Facebook page for updates. The bus is cozy with appropriate temperatures and comfortable seats. Also, the bus drivers are always friendly, caring, helpful and and lovely to chat with. I recommend taking advantage of this wonderful and affordable service. Thank you to Huron Shores Area Transit for your help and for making a more eco-friendly way to get around Lambton Shores!

**Fenn H., Woodstock**

I'm an autistic adult living in Woodstock, Ontario. I can't drive, but I LOVE taking public transit and learning about all the places I can go. (And then going there!) The communities served by HSAT are some of the furthest I can reach by inter-community bus travel out of Woodstock,

## SET YOURSELF FREE WITH HURON SHORES AREA TRANSIT

first going via London. Ever since I discovered that bus travel up to Lake Huron was even a possibility, my trip-planning brain has been going into overdrive.

I LOVE camping, but haven't had the chance since I was a teenager! Through HSAT, I've been inspired to give it a go again. I've got concrete plans for a trip up to Grand Bend in August, to stay in the Pinery Provincial Park.

I put great value on my independence, and I owe a lot to HSAT for providing the transportation for enabling to me to make these independent plans in the first place. With transit options to get me where I want to go, I can dream up and carry out as many of my expeditions as I want without having to rely on friends and family. I hate feeling like my recreational travel puts a burden on the people around me, and this way I don't have to. Thank you SO much for providing the means to get me out and about, seeing all the sights the Huron Shores have to offer!!

### ***Bernie K., Grand Bend***

This is an important service for my son. Brandon is an intellectually challenged young man who would struggle to drive himself. Living in a rural area, he had to count on rides to attend any social programs or get to work. Each week he gets on the bus in Grand Bend to attend a program in Arkona where he hangs out with his peers and works in a store at Rock Glen. Having the bus ensures he can get there and back. The only thing that would make this even better is to have the bus stop at Rock Glen. This is an important tourist attraction in the area and would save him from having to make the long walk from the stop now in place.

### ***Sara M.***

Huron Transit is a great transportation system and is such an asset to our small town of Forest!

My daughter Emma is 40 and has a developmental disability. She has learned to take the bus twice a week from Forest to Arkona where she participates in a day program at Rock Glen with 9 other young people. The drivers are always very kind, patient and helpful. They all greet Emma by name as she gets on the bus. Learning to take the town bus independently has been a great accomplishment for Emma and we are so grateful to Huron Transit for this service in our town.

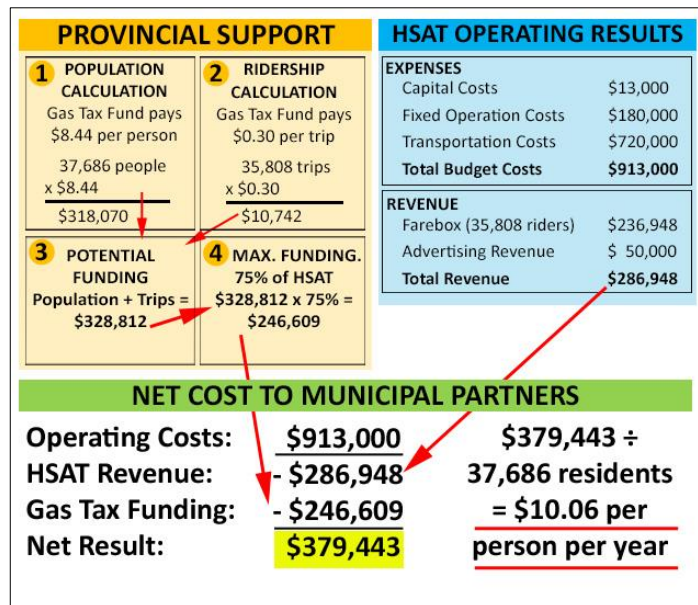
## 2024 FOCUS & INITIATIVES

The year 2023 was a successful year, with challenges primarily related to budget and increased costs. Based on last year’s solutions and enough planning, the expected ridership boom created of summer workers and beachgoers will be resolved. The positive news about the “top up” grant request of an additional \$318,168 from the Community Transportation Program, means we are back on track. Plans for 2024 include:

- Increase ridership to 32,000 passenger trips.
- Increase farebox and advertising revenue.
- Increase awareness of HSAT.
- Increase customer service quality and revenue through the installation of transit shelters and accessory bus stop infrastructure.

### Updated Ontario Gas Tax Fund Projection

The ultimate goal 15 months from now (i.e. March 31, 2025), is to graduate to funding from Ontario’s Gas Tax Fund and achieve the ridership and revenue milestones set out in the Feasibility Study that requires minimal financial support from partner municipalities. Prior to this point, projections were based on the 2019 Feasibility Study’s dollar amounts. The 2023 operations expenses and revenues results provide updated, actual dollar figures for a more accurate projection of the financial contribution required for 2025 and succeeding years.



The updated diagram of the Gas Tax Fund formula is based on 2023 expenses, revenues, percentage breakdowns of trip types, payment types and average fares:

- Fare type breakdown: 68% Cash + Set Dollar Value Smart Cards; 32% Monthly Passes.
- Average Monthly Pass Fare: Based on \$80 Monthly Pass price = \$5.06.
- Average Cash + Smart Card Fare: \$7.35. Based on 53% being local trips and 47% being long-distance trips.<sup>4</sup>
- Monthly Pass farebox revenue: 35,808 x 32% x \$5.06 = \$57,980.

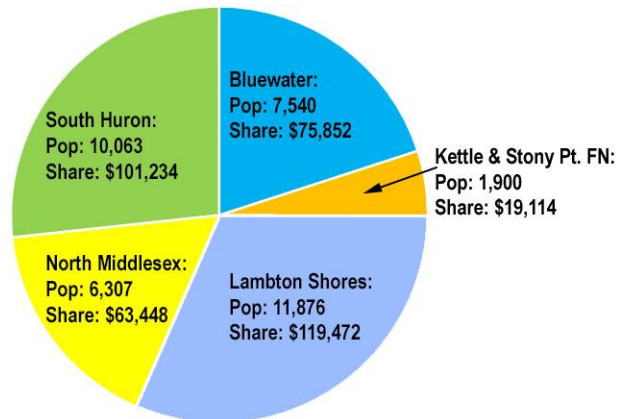
<sup>4</sup> The Feasibility Study estimated 73% of trips would be long-distance with a \$10 average fare, and 27% of trips local with a \$5 average fare.



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- Cash & Smart Card farebox revenue:  $35,808 \times 68\% \times \$7.35 = \$178,968$
- Total projected farebox revenue: \$236,948

Forecast municipal contributions are based on population (2021 Census) and range from \$19k to \$119k. A review of partner municipal budgets indicates these dollar amounts are less than 0.5% of current budgets (KSPFN 2%).



## TRANSIT COMMITTEE

The Transit Advisory Committee emerged in 2019 from the earlier Huron Shores Transit Steering Committee (2017), which formed as a grassroots advocacy group from healthcare, social services, business, economic development, municipal and private partners, who had identified public transit as a major opportunity for community sustainability. The diversity of the Committee's stakeholders 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.
- Rob Ross, Manager of Exeter BIA.
- Doug Cook, Mayor of Lambton Shores and official municipal representative.
- 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, CAO of South Huron and official municipal representative.
- Bruce Shaw, retired Executive Director of Community Living South Huron, former South Huron District High School principal, and Grand Bend Rotary Club member.
- Lynne Van Haaren, retired Firm Administrator of MPW Chartered Professional Accountants LLP, Club Manager of Forest Curling Club, and Director of Forest BIA Board of Directors.
- Kyle Walker, Job Developer, Cooperative Education and Employment Ontario, Lambton College.