

APPENDIX D

Ride Well Transit Analysis



WELLINGTON
COUNTY

Road Master Action Plan





WELLINGTON COUNTY

Ride Well Briefing Paper

Road Master Action Plan

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1.0

Introduction

The purpose of this working paper is to assess the effectiveness of the existing Ride Well transit service against the Vision and Goals of the RMAP. Alternative options and models were also identified based on their potential to meet the mobility needs of the community. These alternatives were considered to improve and/or expand the existing pilot transit service in the County, and the feasibility of making this a permanent transit service.

The RMAP is based on the following Vision:

To connect people and goods across the County safely, conveniently, efficiently and sustainably.

Seven goals are identified to achieve this Vision. The following goals are focused on transit services:

- Goal 1: Create a Transportation Network with a Focus on Safety;
- Goal 2: Provide Sustainable and Equitable Mobility Options that Connect Communities;
- Goal 4: Make Investment Decisions that are Environmentally Responsible;
- Goal 5: Support Economic Development; and,
- Goal 6: Be Fiscally-Responsible When Making Investment Decisions.

1.1

Role of Transit

Car ownership is higher in rural areas. 2016 Census data indicates that 87.6% of trips within Wellington County are performed by a driver and passenger. However, not everyone has access to a vehicle and/or can attain a driver's license. These transportation disadvantaged individuals include the elderly, children, individuals with a lower income, and people with disabilities. In Wellington County, the elderly (18.4%) and children (17.6%) make up about a third of the population, while just under 9% of people residing in Wellington County live in poverty. Based on these findings, there is an obvious need for a safe and equitable solution for these transportation disadvantaged individuals.

This suggests that the primary purpose of transit in large rural municipalities such as Wellington County is to support the goal of transportation equity.

A secondary focus of transit is to reduce auto mode share. This can only be achieved by providing a high level of service that is competitive with the automobile. Achieving this level of service requires transit to operate through higher density of development, which increases the potential market around each transit stop, thus adding additional passenger fares to offset operating costs. This is very difficult to achieve in rural areas, particularly for long-distance trips between urban communities.

For Wellington County, the primary role of transit is to connect communities within the County rather than focus on service within local urban areas. This makes achieving a mode shift even more challenging, given the long-distances of rural farmland between the urban areas of each local municipality. The existing Ride Well service provided by Wellington County accomplished this role.

2.0

Transportation Services in Wellington County

Public, private and community transportation in Wellington County is provided by a number of different service providers. This includes:

1. An On Demand public transit service pilot provided by the County (Ride Well);
2. Community agencies operating transportation services in Wellington County;
3. Other public transit services operating through and adjacent to Wellington County;
4. Charter and school bus services available in Wellington County;
5. Ridesharing services in Wellington County; and,
6. Taxi services in Wellington County.

Each of these are described in more detail below.

2.1

Ride Well

2.1.1

Service Description

Wellington County provides an On Demand public transit service called Ride Well, which offers curb-to-curb service to any address within the boundaries of Wellington County and to/from the City of Guelph as long as trips start or end in the County. The service is a pilot under the Ministry of Transportation Community Transportation Grant Program, expected to end in 2025. Prior to this point, a decision will need to be made about the sustainability of the program should provincial funding not be continued.

On Demand Transit is a shared-ride demand-responsive public transit service that can be implemented in any community. The service model does not follow a fixed-route or schedule. Instead, passengers must pre-book trips and vehicles are routed dynamically to the passenger's pick-up and drop-off point. Modern On Demand services utilize mobile app technology, which allows customers to plan, book, track and pay for their ride in real-time, all while optimizing trips to increase the number of shared rides that can be accommodated without sacrificing service quality.



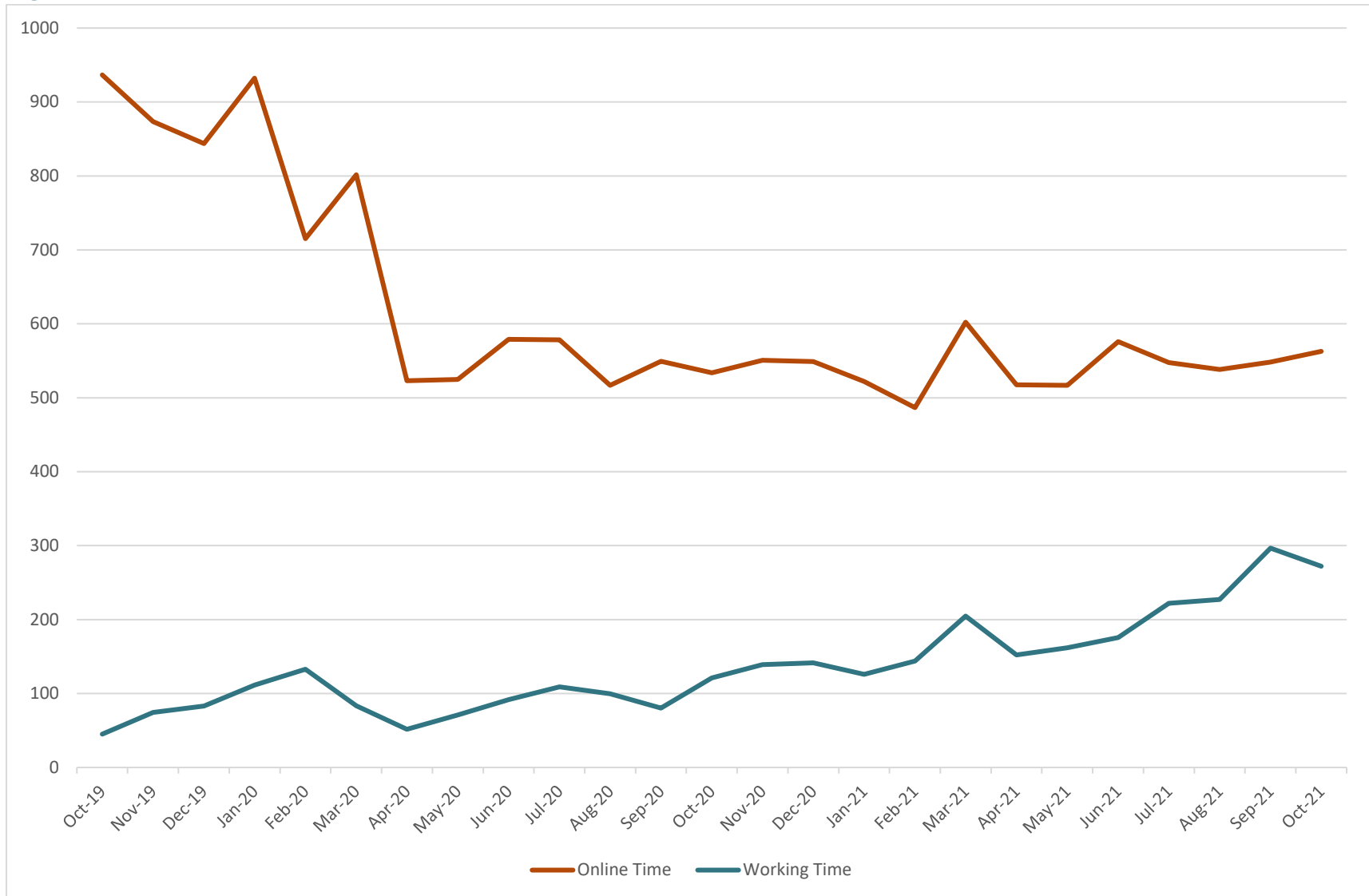
The purpose of Ride Well is to provide an affordable mobility option for everyone in the County and has never been intended to generate a noticeable shift in the mode share for private vehicles.

The service is contracted to an On Demand technology provider (RideCo) to develop and manage the mobile booking and scheduling platform and to operate the service. RideCo contracts drivers, who operate, store and maintain their own vehicles. Trips can be booked via smartphone app and webpage anytime of the day, or over the phone Monday to Friday between the hours of 8:30 am - 4:30 pm. The service is provided using one to three non-accessible sedans that seat up to three passengers. Trips that require an accessible vehicle must be booked via phone and are contracted to a local taxi company who uses an accessible taxi to deliver the service (Fergus-Elora Taxi). Ride Well runs Monday to Friday, from 6:00 am to 7:00 pm, with no service on weekends and Statutory Holidays.

The service began with four peak and two off-peak vehicles. However, lower than anticipated ridership (8 daily trips) resulted in the County reducing the number of active vehicles to two in October 2020. This was in part due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which began five months after the launch of the service. As illustrated in **Figure 1** below, ridership was slowly increasing, but reduced in March 2020 with new lockdown measures in place. **Figure 1** also illustrates the corresponding reduction in vehicle hours, which reduced the number of 'idling hours' where vehicles were waiting for a passenger trip request.

This figure also demonstrates two advantages of the Ride Well model over a traditional fixed-route service:

1. Vehicles do not have to travel when there is no trip request made, thus reducing GHG emissions from empty vehicles travelling without passengers.
2. The County can adjust the number of vehicles on the road if ridership is low without impacting the integrity of the service.

Figure 1: Revenue Total Hours of Ride Well Vehicles (October 2019 to October 2021)

Fares are charged based on distance travelled. This ranges from a minimum of \$5.00 to a maximum of \$40.00. To assist with the promotion of the Ride Well, the County has developed discount vouchers for some residents. For example, there is a senior discount available, which deducts 10% off of the total trip price. There are also promotional coupon codes available to encourage residents to shop local, and visit a Taste Real partner (another County initiative).

The average trip distance is 13.1 km and the average fare is \$9.07. **Table 1** below shows the number of trips completed for each price range and average distance. As seen below, very few people take long distance trips on the service with fares over \$20.00. A \$20.00 fare is equivalent to a 33 km trip, which include:

- Trip between Mount Forest and Elora (44 km);
- Trip between Fergus and Erin (36 km);
- Trip between Arthur and north Guelph (35 km); and,
- Trip between Alma and the University of Guelph (33 km).

Table 1: Average Distance of Trips

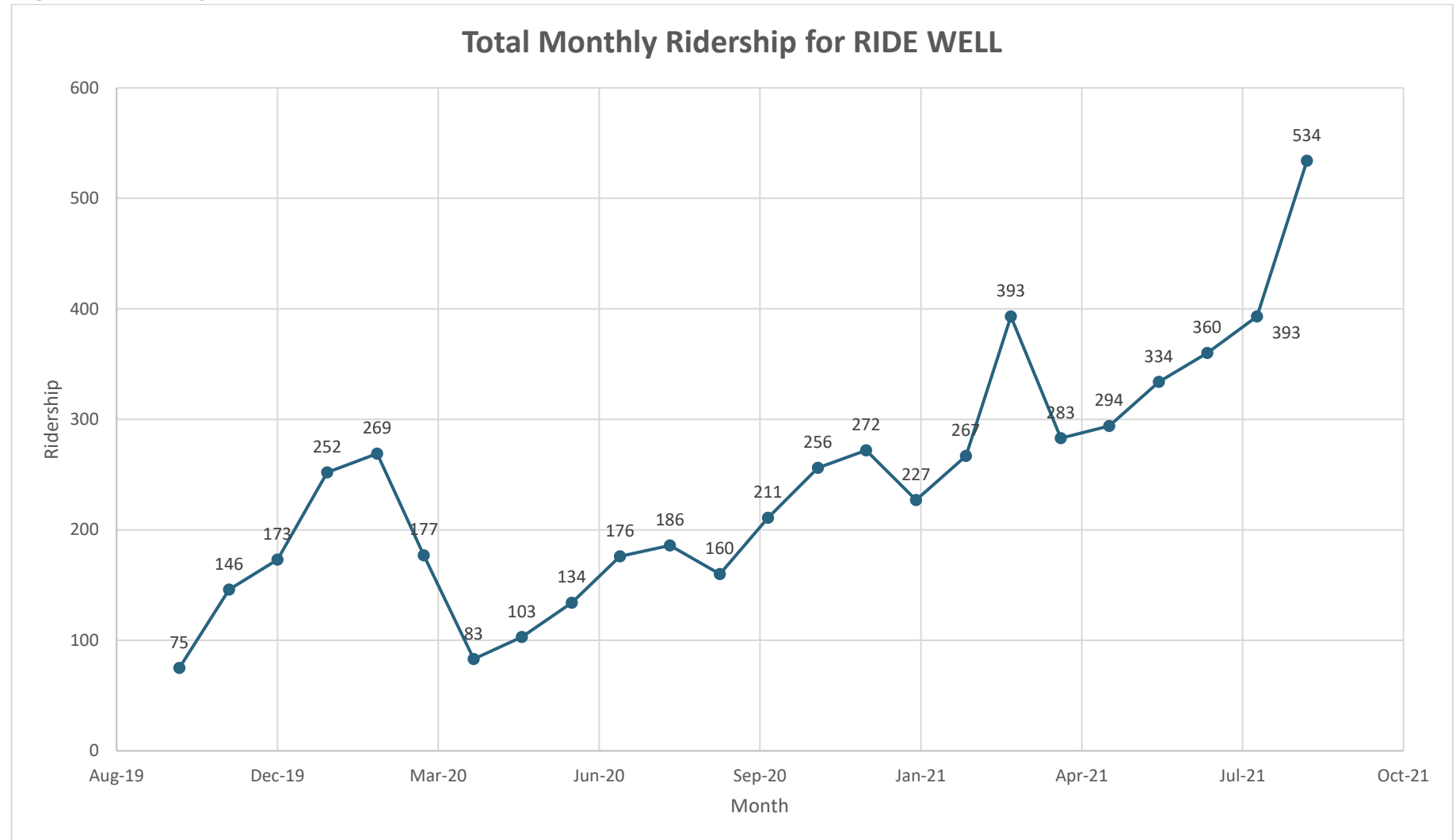
Range	Average Trip Price	# of Trips	Subtotal	% of Trips
\$5.00 min	\$5.00	1,596	\$7,980	51%
\$6.00 - \$10.00	\$6.81	377	\$2,566	12%
\$11.00 - \$20.00	\$12.80	971	\$12,425	31%
\$20.00 - \$40.00 max	\$31.74	164	\$5,206	5%

2.1.2 Registrants and Ridership

Currently, there are 877 customers registered for the service. This represents about 1% of all eligible Wellington residents (over the age of 13).

Ride Well currently achieves approximately 25 rides per day, or 0.98 rides per service hour. There has been an increase in ridership since the first few months of COVID-19 pandemic due to partnerships developed with some community care agencies who are struggling to find volunteer drivers and are using Ride Well to provide service for their members. In September 2021, Ride Well reported its highest month of ridership to date (534 rides) (**Figure 2**).

Based on pick-ups per capita, the municipalities that are most active include, Centre Wellington and Wellington North.

Figure 2: Monthly Trips Completed October 2019 to September 2021

2.2

Community Agencies Operating Transportation Services in Wellington County

The following is a list of community agencies that provide transportation services in Wellington County.

Wellington Transportation Services

The Wellington Transportation Services is operated by the Community Resource Centre of North and Centre Wellington, and receives funding from Wellington County. The group is a collaborative network of community service providers, which operate volunteer-based accessible transportation services for residents in Centre Wellington, Wellington North, Minto and Mapleton Townships. Each participating agency has their own client requirements, however most target seniors, persons with disabilities, and/or low-income individuals for essential trips (i.e. appointments, job interviews). Residents must qualify for each agency based on the requirements.

Family & Children Services Guelph Wellington County

Family & Children Services Guelph Wellington serves clients (children and families) who live within Wellington County. Upon request, clients have access to a team of volunteer drivers who may transport children to school or children and families to the centre. Taxi service is sometimes used when volunteer drivers are not available. Fares are charged based on distance travelled.

Victoria Order of Nurses (VON)

The Victoria Order of Nurses (VON) is a longstanding community group in Wellington County. VON runs a demand responsive transportation service for seniors and adults with disabilities. Customers can book trips to medical appointments, grocery shopping, adult day programs, and other appointments. A combination of volunteer and paid drivers are used. Volunteer drivers use their own vehicles and paid drivers drive the fleet of accessible and non-accessible vehicles. Customers pay a standard fee for in-town trips (\$3.50 one way) and a per km rate for out-of-town trips (45 cents/km). The VON also has a fare subsidy program which is based on a client's income.

East Wellington Community Services

East Wellington Community Services is a fully accessible door-to-door transportation service for residents living in East Wellington. To be considered for the service, residents must be a senior or adult with a disability. When a customer books their trip, a vehicle will be selected based on their needs. The fleet consists of a wheelchair accessible van/bus, a passenger van, and cars. The vehicles are all driven by volunteer drivers. The service operates Monday to Friday between 8:30 am and 4:00 pm. Eligible trips include appointments in Ballinafad, Hillsburgh, Eramosa, Orton, Erin and Rockwood. In addition, customers can book a trip to the Greater

Toronto Area, Hamilton, Orangeville, Georgetown and the Waterloo/Wellington region. Customers are charged a fare to use the service, but it is not publicly disclosed.

2.2.1 Existing Community Partnerships with Ride Well

The following are community agencies that have existing partnerships with Ride Well.

Wellington County Social Services

The partnership with the Wellington County Social Services has been in existence for a little over a year (established on March 26, 2020). The partnership allows the Community Resource Centre of North and Centre Wellington (CRC) customers to use Ride Well to complete their trips. The CRC books rides on behalf of their clients using a coupon code that is only available to two of their staff members. This allows the CRC to screen clients accordingly before allowing them to use the service.

Wellington County Housing Department

Ride Well has also partnered with the Wellington County Housing Department to provide transportation services to designated senior centers. The senior centres have funding to provide transportation, but do not have a service in-house. Thus, the partnership provides a coupon code to provide transportation for of low-income seniors to and from medical appointments. The partnership was established September 30, 2020.

East Wellington Community Services

Partnered in August 2021 to provide transportation for youth attending their Integrated Youth Services Network (IYSN) hub. The partnership allows EWCS to use a coupon code to book a free ride on Ride Well for their youth clientele. County staff then invoice EWCS for the cost of the coupon code each month.

2.3 Other Public Transit Services Operating in Wellington County

The following are other public transit services operating in Wellington County.

Guelph to Owen Sound Transit (GOST)

In August 2020, the City of Owen Sound launched a fixed-route inter-city transit service: Guelph to Owen Sound Transit (GOST). The service begins at the Owen Sound Transit Terminal and ends at the Guelph Central Station. GOST operates seven days a week with two daily round-trips. The southbound trips depart at 7:30 am and 2:30 pm and northbound trips depart at 10:32 am and 5:32 pm. The running time of a one-way trip is 2 hours 17 minutes. Between Guelph and Owen Sound, the route serves Wellington County with stops in Mount Forest, Arthur, Fergus, and Elora. On average, there are 80 passenger trips monthly, with 19 trips originating in Wellington County. Daily ridership is about 6 trips a day, with less than 1 originating in

Wellington County¹. The fare to ride GOST is based on zones, ranging from \$5.00 to \$20.00. The service is contracted to Voyago with a fully accessible 20+2 passenger bus.

GO Transit

GO Transit operates three fixed routes (25, 48, and 33) in the southern and eastern portions of Wellington County. Route 25 serves Aberfoyle at the Aberfoyle Park and Ride and travels to Toronto via Waterloo, Kitchener, Cambridge, Milton, Mississauga, and Brampton. Route 48 connects Aberfoyle Park & Ride and Pickering via Guelph, Hamilton, Burlington, Oakville, Mississauga, Brampton, Vaughan, Richmond Hill, Markham, and Scarborough. Finally, Route 33 serves the east side of Wellington County, with a stop in Rockwood. The route has stops in Kitchener, Guelph, Acton, Georgetown, Brampton and Toronto.

In addition to this, GO Transit operates GO Train service on the Kitchener line connecting the Region of Waterloo with downtown Toronto, with a stop in downtown Guelph. The service currently operates peak period, peak direction service to the City of Toronto. There is a plan in place to move to two-way, all-day service by 2025. This project will assist in building more reliable and frequent inter-community transit.

2.4

Public Transit Operating Adjacent to Wellington County

The following are public transit services operating adjacent to Wellington County.

Grey Transit Route (GTR)

Grey Transit Route (GTR) is a fixed-route inter-community transit service, which was launched by Grey County in September 2020. The transit service is a network of six fixed-routes. These routes do not cross the boundary of Wellington County, however they do provide potential connection opportunities north and east of the County. Route 6 has stops north of Wellington County in Flesherton, Durham, Hanover, and Walkerton. Route 2 has stops east of the County in Dundalk, Shelburne, and Orangeville. Although GTR is a fixed-route operating model, customers must book in advance on the Driverseat app or by calling into the call centre. Customers pay a fixed fare to ride GTR. All routes are \$5.00 per an adult, except Route 5 which is \$3.00 per an adult.

Guelph Transit

Guelph Transit operates 20 fixed-route buses throughout the City of Guelph. All routes operate on a 30 minute headway every day of the week, with additional peak service on key routes. Currently, Ride Well has permission to operate in the City of Guelph. Potential transit connection opportunities could include the SmartCentres (Routes 18 and 99), and the Pergola Commons (Route 16). Customers pay a fixed fare to ride Guelph Transit - all routes are \$3.00 per an adult. Guelph Transit also operates a specialized transit service for persons with disabilities. As of May 3, 2021, Guelph Transit introduced an on-demand service within

¹ Ridership from September to December, 2020

Downtown and South Guelph zones. Passengers in these zones can book on-demand, door-to-door trips using a RideCo app.

Grand River Transit (GRT)

Grand River Transit (GRT) provides transit service to the Region of Waterloo, including Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge, Elmira, and Wilmot. Service is available seven days a week. Currently, Ride Well does not connect with GRT. Potential connection opportunities could be considered in the northern and southern portions of the region. The northern connection could include, Conestoga Mall Station (Routes 201, 202, 6, 7, 9, 14, 21, 29, and 31), St. Jacob's and Elmira (Route 21). Whereas, the southern connection would include Victoria Street and Lackner Boulevard area in Kitchener (Routes 34 and 204). Customers pay a fixed fare to ride GRT - all routes are \$3.25 per an adult. The Region is currently looking to pilot an On Demand Transit service in the community of Breslau, with a potential connection to the future Breslau GO Station. This may be another ideal connection with Ride Well. The Region also provides a specialized transit service in the entire region, including all of the rural municipalities in the Region. The rural specialized transit service is operated by Kiwanis Transit.

Saugeen Mobility and Regional Transit

Saugeen Mobility and Regional Transit (SMART) is a specialized On Demand transit service for residents with disabilities of nine municipalities in Bruce and Grey Counties: Arran-Elderslie, Brockton, Hanover, Huron-Kinloss, Chatsworth, Kincardine, Saugeen Shores, Southgate and West Grey. The service operates Monday to Saturday, with hours based on trip requests. Trips can be booked outside of the service area (i.e. Elora) but must originate or end in the service area. The fleet includes 26 accessible vans and buses.

Orangeville Transit

Orangeville provides a local fixed-route bus services east of Wellington County. The service operates Monday to Saturday between the hours of 7:15 am and 8:43 pm. There are three routes; the Red Route provides the closest connection point to Wellington County. Currently, Ride Well does not connect to Orangeville Transit.

2.5

Charter and School Bus Services Available in Wellington County

There are three private and school bus operators that currently provide transportation in the County.

Switzer-Carty Transportation

Switzer-Carty Transportation is a school bus company that provides bus transportation for students from the Upper Grand District School Board and the Wellington Catholic District School Board. The service is also available for hire in Wellington County. The cost of the service is not publicly disclosed.

Elliott Coach Lines

Elliott Coach Lines is the largest school bus service provider in Wellington County and Waterloo Region. The company provides a roundtrip service between Salem/Elora and Fergus and Guelph. The morning service starts in Salem, stops in Elora and Fergus, and terminates at University of Guelph. The afternoon route provides the return trip. Elliott Coach Lines uses a fixed fare of \$5.

Denny's Bus Lines

Denny's Bus Lines offers charter service on Thursday Mornings and Evenings from Erin to Orangeville, and Orangeville to Guelph (with stops in Erin and Hillsburgh). The service only runs if there are enough passengers to justify the cost. The return cost is \$4.50 from Erin to Orangeville, \$9.25 from Orangeville to Guelph, and \$6.25 from Erin to Guelph.

2.6 Ride Sharing Services

Uber

Uber is an On Demand ridesharing service, which pairs a customer and driver together via smartphone app. Uber serves many communities close to the County, such as Guelph, Waterloo Region, and Orangeville. Recently, Uber expanded their network to serve areas within Wellington County closest to the City of Guelph (Puslinch, Guelph/Eramosa, and Centre Wellington)

2.7 Taxi Services

The County issues taxi licenses to service providers who want to operate within the County. Currently, there are six taxi companies including Allied Taxi, CW Green Taxi, Dan's Taxi, Fergus-Elora Taxi, Tj's Taxi (based in Listowel and has a fleet in Mount Forest), and Harriston Taxi.

3.0 Transit Demand

The potential future demand for transit services was calculated to determine the feasibility of maintaining a service and options for service improvements or changes to the service design.

The population of Wellington County is expected to grow by 32 percent by 2041, from an existing population of 103,820 to 136,830². Most of this growth will be in Centre Wellington, followed by Wellington North. The level of population and employment growth by community is illustrated in **Table 2**.

² Source: *Wellington County Population, Household and Employment Forecast Update 2011-2041*

Potential ridership growth was forecasted on Ride Well to determine the potential level of service required to meet future population and employment growth. This was used in the evaluation of alternatives and potential for expansion.

Currently, Ride Well delivers 25 daily trips, or 0.98 trips per revenue vehicle hour. This has been growing steadily despite the COVID-19 pandemic. **Figure 3** breaks down Wellington County in six zones and illustrates the existing ridership between each of the local municipalities within the County.

To forecast future ridership, three steps were taken:

1. Review typical rates of ridership per capita and service hour against other similar-sized rural transit systems and adjust.
2. Adjust for growth in ridership as the County recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Calculate potential growth in ridership due to population and employment growth.

3.1 Post-Pandemic Ridership Growth

The Ride Well service began in the fall of 2019 just before the COVID-19 pandemic and was not given enough time to reach a state of maturity. To help determine the potential ridership as the County enters recovery, a benchmark review was conducted of other rural transit services in Ontario for the year 2019 (prior to the pandemic). This is illustrated in **Table 3**.

Table 2: Population Growth in Wellington County

Location	2021*	2036	2041
Centre Wellington	34,020	48,520	52,350
Fergus	17,930	28,780	31,630
Elora/Salem	8,610	12,080	13,060
Centre Wellington Rural	7,480	7,660	7,625
Erin	12,590	15,080	15,320
Erin Village / Hillsburgh	4,310	6,220	6,220
Erin Rural	8,290	8,860	9,140
Guelph/Eramosa	13,890	14,330	14,270
Rockwood	5,230	5,820	5,770
Guelph/Eramosa Rural	8,660	8,500	8,500
Mapleton	11,610	13,620	14,230
Drayton	2,600	3,650	3,990
Moorefield	920	1,730	1,970
Mapleton Rural	8,100	8,240	8,270
Minto	9,740	12,380	12,810
Clifford	940	1,270	1,350
Harriston	2,280	3,260	3,240
Palmerston	3,200	4,310	4,660
Minto Rural	3,310	3,530	3,560
Puslinch	8,490	9,540	9,950
Aberfoyle	330	330	320
Morrison	510	590	620

Location	2021*	2036	2041
Puslinch Rural	7,650	8,630	9,020
Wellington North	13,480	17,170	17,900
Arthur	2,860	3,700	3,670
Mount Forest	6,070	8,550	9,230
Wellington North Rural	4,540	4,920	5,000
Wellington County	103,820	130,640	136,830

**Includes Net Census Undercount Adjustment*

Figure 3: Daily Ride Well Ridership Patterns in Wellington County

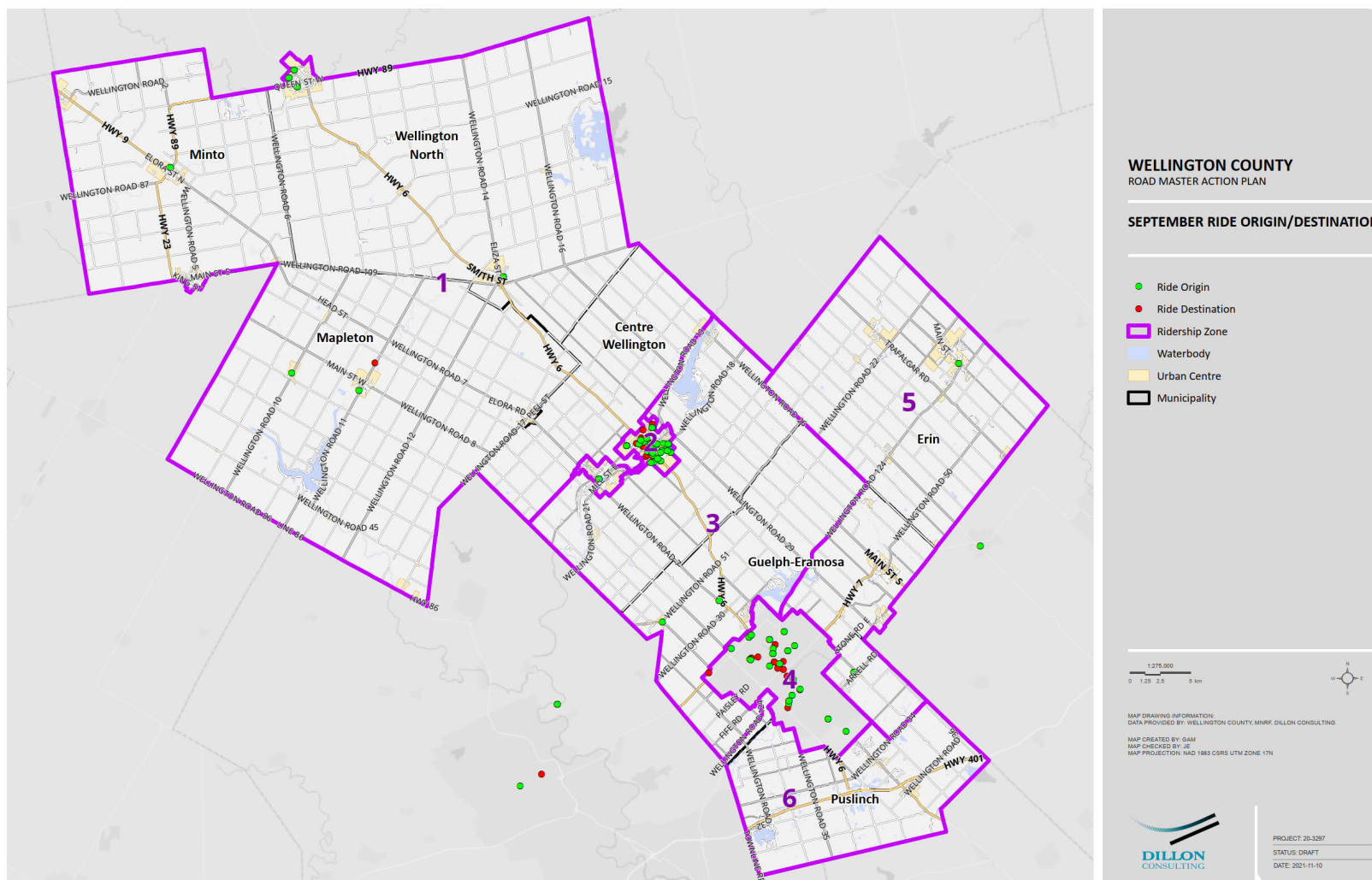


Table 3: Benchmark Review of other Rural Transit Systems

System	Population	Geographic Area (km²)	Ridership	Revenue Vehicle Hours	Boardings per Capita	Boardings per Service Hour	Service Hours per Capita	Average Fare	Cost per Capita
Wellington County*	103,820	2,657	6,130	6,526	0.06	0.94	0.05	\$9.07	\$3.21
Norfolk County	31,000	1,648	10,698	4,759	0.35	6.49	0.15	\$3.83	\$12.73
Simcoe County	158,377	4,841	91,140	26,127	0.58	18.83	0.16	\$1.17	\$19.00
Muskoka District Municipality	60,599	4,765	3,312	3,366	0.05	0.70	0.06	\$14.65	\$3.67
Brant County	37,000	916	3,939	N/A	0.11	N/A	N/A	\$2.21	N/A
Marmora and Lake	21,731	2,294	5,036	5,695	0.23	0.88	0.26	\$6.77	\$9.78
Deseronto	48,725	1,898	10,799	7,084	0.22	1.52	0.15	\$9.07	\$8.18
Average	59,572	2,727	20,821	9,406	0.26	2.21	0.16	\$7.10	\$9.26

*Annualized based on September 2021 data

As noted above, rural transit systems typically achieve a lower rate of boardings per hour than their urban counterparts. This is due to the nature of rural transit, which requires vehicles to travel long-distances through low density areas.

The number of trips per capita in Wellington County is generally lower than the peer average, excluding Muskoka. While some of this is due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there are other indicators that suggest a potential for ridership to grow:

1. **Average fare is higher in Wellington County:** Higher fares can make riding public transit an unattractive and/or unattainable option to get around the County. Lowering the fares can encourage people to use transit more regularly.
2. **Boardings per capita is lower:** Launching Ride Well just before the pandemic resulted in lower ridership than expected. As restrictions are lifted and people begin to feel more comfortable using public transit, it is expected that ridership will grow naturally.
3. **Service hours per capita is lower:** Growth in ridership can be supported by an expansion of service hours, either the length of hours during the day or number of vehicles on the road. Ride Well has the fewest service hours per capita, which is reflective of the low ridership. Expanding the service hours allows more people to book a ride across different times of the day.

Should a number of short-term service improvements be made (see **Section 5.1**), it is expected that there could be an increase to 1.2 trips per capita over the next few years with the recovery from the pandemic (from 0.06 today).

A post-pandemic baseline ridership rate was developed based on the information above. The estimate assumes that service hours per capita is between the existing trips per capita and the peer group average. This is illustrated in **Table 4** below:

Table 4: Post Pandemic Potential Daily Ridership Estimates

Zone	Population	Ridership	Heading to Zone 1	Heading to Zone 2	Heading to Zone 3	Heading to Zone 4	Heading to Zone 5	Heading to Zone 6
1	34,830	16	14	2	0	0	0	0
2	26,540	12	0	10	0	2	0	0
3	7,480	4	0	0	0	3	0	0
4	144,316	6	0	4	0	0	2	0
5	26,480	12	0	0	0	12	0	0
6	8,490	4	0	0	0	3	0	0
Total	248,136	55						

3.2 2041 Growth

The post-pandemic ridership in **Table 4** was added to the existing ridership, and used as a starting point to forecast future transit demand.

The rate of population growth in each community was used to forecast potential ridership using this as a base. Since the primary function of transit in larger rural areas is to provide mobility for individuals that do not have other travel options, no significant change in mode share (or transit trips per capita) was used. Given the uncertainty of ridership, a “High” and “Low” range ridership forecast was developed to reflect the potential range in transit mode share.

The “Low” forecast projects a slight increase in the post pandemic “mature state” of ridership (0.12 boardings per capita) to 0.14 trips per capita. The “High” forecast assumes that same trips per capita as the peer group average in **Table 3** (0.26 trips per capita).

Table 5 and **Table 6** reflect the potential High and Low 2041 demand between communities. This was used to assess potential service options.

Table 5: Low Potential 2041 Daily Transit Demand

Zone	Population	Ridership	Heading to Zone 1	Heading to Zone 2	Heading to Zone 3	Heading to Zone 4	Heading to Zone 5	Heading to Zone 6
1	44,940	25	22	2	0	1	0	0
2	44,690	25	1	20	0	4	0	0
3	7,625	4	0	0	0	4	0	0
4	193,684	10	0	7	0	0	3	0
5	29,590	17	0	0	0	17	0	0
6	9,950	6	0	0	1	4	1	0
Total	330,479*	87						

*Including Guelph Population

Table 6: High Potential 2041 Daily Transit Demand

Zone	Population	Ridership	Heading to Zone 1	Heading to Zone 2	Heading to Zone 3	Heading to Zone 4	Heading to Zone 5	Heading to Zone 6
1	44,940	46	40	4	0	1	0	0
2	44,690	46	1	36	0	8	0	0
3	7,625	8	0	1	0	7	0	0
4	193,684	20	0	14	0	0	5	0
5	29,590	30	0	0	0	30	0	0
6	9,950	10	0	0	1	8	1	0
Total	330,479*	159						

*Including Guelph Population

4.0 Service Options

The post-pandemic and long-term transit demand was used to assess the need to expand or change the transit service model within the County. Typically, in rural areas, there are four options assuming the goal of Wellington County is to continue to provide some level of transit access to all residents of the County.

4.1 Continued On Demand Service

The first option is to continue operating Ride Well as an On Demand service model, with Wellington County as the operator. This model of service delivery has proven to provide a quality level of service and reliability for customers.

Dedicated On Demand transit service operates best in low-density areas where there is limited and inconsistent ridership demand (e.g. a trip is not requested regularly). The use of dedicated drivers increases service reliability (a driver will not turn down a trip request), but may increase costs during periods of very low demand, as drivers are paid, even if there are no trip requests.

The benefit of this model is that it offers a relatively simple way to “right size” the fleet and service offerings based on resident demands. For example, at present, only two to four vehicles are in operation on a given day, but should demand increase, the platform is already in place to onboard additional operators to respond to the need. A relatively simple next step for service expansion, would be the introduction of additional vehicles to reduce waiting time or expansion of service to other operating hours (e.g. Saturday service).

4.2 Partner with Ridesharing and Taxis

One alternative option for the delivery of flexible transit service is leveraging partnerships with ridesharing companies or local taxi operators. In this model, drivers are paid per trip and are not dedicated to the service. Since they are not employed by Wellington County, they would have the right to accept a trip or reject it, based on when the driver is working and if the trip would generate enough income to make it worth their while. Ride Well currently uses this model when an accessible vehicle is required. In this instance, Fergus-Elora Taxi is called and they are paid for the trip instead of by the hour. This includes payment of non-revenue service to pick-up the passenger.

This type of relationship also exists in Innisfil Ontario. The Town of Innisfil has partnered with Uber and Barrie-Innisfil Taxi (for accessible rides) to bring a reliable, affordable, On Demand transit service to serve all residents of Innisfil. In 2016, the Municipal Council of the Town of Innisfil determined that the cost of operating two buses was too significant for the limited mobility this service would provide. Instead, the Town issued a Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEOI) and Uber was selected to operate an app-based platform (i.e. UberPool) to

facilitate ridesharing and the matching of 2 or more passengers on trips across the entire Town. The service has been in operation for several years, and has been a great success for passengers. Through this model, the Town has avoided paying substantial upfront costs of starting a transit service, but rather provides funding to subsidize fares. One of the challenges of this model has been maintain cost control. Since there are few limitations on the number of drivers available, most trips are single ride and costs have constantly exceeded budgets with growing ridership.

This model is most effective when ridership demand is very low, however, becomes less reliable for short-distance trips located far from urban centres where most drivers reside. This would require a driver to drive a long-distance, and only get paid for a short-distance fare, which may not be acceptable, or the County to pay for non-revenue travel time (when the driver is heading to pick-up the passenger), which can lead to very high costs. Therefore, areas in northern Wellington County may not be suitable for this model.

The benefit of this model is that it could easily complement the existing On Demand service model, or any fixed-route service that may be contemplated in the future. Similar to an On Demand service which is contracted out, the County could enter into a partnership with existing service providers in the County who may be able to offer trips in a way that is more efficient. For example, it may be more cost effective for the County to have Uber or a taxi provider to deliver shared trips in the communities surrounding the City of Guelph, as these providers already have a presence in these areas, and likely could provide the service quickly and efficiently. By contrast, further to the north, where ridesharing and taxi companies are not as available, Ride Well could better focus its resources.

Concerns over cost control could be addressed by only using these operators when a Ride Well vehicle is not available within a reasonable time of the trip request; or for short-distance trips in higher density areas where there is a better opportunity to share rides.

The County could also permit non-dedicated mobility options to be displayed on the Ride Well app without subsidizing the fare. This would allow residents to select the most appropriate mobility option available to them, including paying a higher fare for a taxi or ridesharing service.

4.3 Implement a Fixed Route Service

Another alternative model is to create a new conventional, fixed-route transit service along key corridors in Wellington. These services typically use larger vehicles and follow a fixed-route and schedule, connecting points where there is higher ridership potential. The Highway 6 corridor is already serviced by the existing Guelph Owen Sound Transportation (GOST) service between Mount Forest and the City of Guelph and Elliott Bus lines provide fixed-route services between Fergus and Guelph. This model is best suited for areas that have higher density of ridership with stops on roads that have pedestrian infrastructure (e.g. sidewalks and paved surfaces at bus stops).

If this model were to be pursued, it is recommended that the service would focus on long distance trips, connecting communities within Wellington County where ridership was over 4-5 boardings per revenue vehicle hour. The ability to achieve a minimum of four trips per weekday should be in place to ensure flexibility in travel options (unless supplemented by On Demand Transit). Typically, fixed-route services in rural areas use small accessible cutaway buses that seat 10-12 passengers, with the ability to accommodate a wheelchair or scooter.

An example of this type of service is the Owen Sound GOST Bus, which provides two round trips per day between the City of Owen Sound and the City of Guelph along the Highway 6 corridor.

4.4 Continue Ongoing Partnerships with Community Care

In this model, community care and social services agencies are provided with funding from the County to support existing community transportation services for their members. Trips are delivered either by paid drivers using accessible vehicles or volunteer drivers using their own vehicles. Typically, service is limited to residents registered for the community care or social service agency. The County of Wellington currently funds transportation services through these agencies. While this is effective, service is not open to all residents in the community that may need a ride. There are also challenges attracting volunteer drivers as the population continues to grow and age. This service model is most suited to provide trips for persons with disabilities or seniors that may require an extra level of care (e.g. bring the passenger to the door of their destination and help them with parcels). Wellington County would not operate the service, but would contribute funding.

4.5 Summary

There is no 'one-size-fits-all' service model that is applicable to Wellington County. Each of the above noted service options are better suited for different geographic areas, different trip purposes and different ridership demands. The ideal characteristics of each service model in a rural environment such as Wellington County are summarized below in **Table 7**. The alignment of each service model to the relevant goals of the RMAP are illustrated in **Table 8**.

Table 7: Ideal Characteristics of Each Transit Service Model

Characteristics	Dedicated On Demand Service	Non-Dedicated On Demand Service	Dedicated Fixed-Route Service	Community Care Partnerships
Geography Serviced	Suitable for any geographic areas within the County	Suitable to urban areas within close proximity to the City of Guelph.	Suitable within larger urban hamlets or connecting multiple urban areas together that have higher ridership demand.	Suitable for any geographic areas within the County
Typical Ridership per Hour	1-2 boardings per hour	1-1.5 boarding per hour	Over 3 boardings per hour	1-1.5 boardings per hour
Population Serviced	All Individuals	All Individuals	Not ideal for persons with disabilities due to the challenge of accessing accessible stops	Seniors and persons with disabilities

Table 8: Alignment of Transit Service Options to RMAP Goals

RMAP Goal	Dedicated On Demand Service	Non-Dedicated On Demand Service	Dedicated Fixed-Route Service	Community Care Partnerships
Goal 1: Create a Transportation Network with a Focus on Safety	Passengers picked up at curb – Ideal where there are no sidewalks.	Passengers picked up at curb – Ideal where there are no sidewalks.	Passengers picked up at stop. Not ideal on rural roads with no pedestrian infrastructure.	Passengers picked up at door – Ideal for vulnerable population.
Goal 2: Provide Sustainable and Equitable Mobility Options that Connect Communities	Equity: Achieves goal of providing every resident with an equal opportunity to access transit.	Equity: Residents in the north may not get the same level of service as residents to the south.	Equity: Only provides transit service to residents that live in close proximity to a stop (typically in the urban hamlets of the County).	Equity: Only eligible for seniors and persons with disabilities.

RMAP Goal	Dedicated On Demand Service	Non-Dedicated On Demand Service	Dedicated Fixed-Route Service	Community Care Partnerships
	Sustainable: The service model is easily scalable and can be designed to be very responsive to growing or changing demand.	Sustainable: The service model is easily scalable in near larger urban centres and can be designed to be very responsive to growing or changing demand. The model is not as sustainable in communities further from large population centres.	Sustainable: The service model is not easily scalable, and is generally not as able to respond to changes in client demand due larger vehicles used and need to service the entire corridor.	Sustainable: Expanding the number of volunteer drivers is difficult.
Goal 4: Make Investment Decisions that are Environmentally Responsible	Second highest potential for ridesharing if fleet is constrained.	Lowest potential for ridesharing due to larger number of drivers.	Highest potential for ridesharing, but larger vehicle required which may emit more GHGs.	Lowest potential for ridesharing as passengers are typically transported individually.
Goal 5: Support Economic Development	Since resources are spread throughout the County, the level of service (e.g. frequency) to support employment areas may be limited.	May provide a higher level of service due to vehicle availability, but at a higher cost to the County.	Can target scheduled service to employment areas, but only accessible for residents living on the fixed-route corridor.	Limited as the model only services seniors and persons with disabilities, with limited options for work trips.
Goal 6: Be Fiscally-Responsible When Making Investment Decisions	When transit use is low, this model is likely one of the most fiscally sustainable options. When transit usage increases along a corridor (3-4 boardings an	When transit use is very low, this model is likely the most fiscally sustainable as the County only pays for trips provided.	When transit use is low, this model is the least financially sustainable model. This is because no matter how many passengers use the service, the County must pay for the provision of	This model subsidizes other provincial and grant funding provided to agencies, therefore the level of investment from

RMAP Goal	Dedicated On Demand Service	Non-Dedicated On Demand Service	Dedicated Fixed-Route Service	Community Care Partnerships
	hour), a fixed-route transit service is more productive and efficient.		a bus running a fixed route and fixed schedule. Financial sustainability occurs when ridership targets are met.	the County is minimal.

As illustrated above, each of the service models has the ability to align to each of the relevant RMAP Goals, but only if implemented in the appropriate context. For example, a fixed-route transit service does not achieve the Goal of equity as it is not feasible or sustainable to provide fixed-route services throughout the entire County. However, fixed-route transit services can be more cost effective if implemented along a higher density corridor. This suggests that a combination of various different service models would be most ideal as population and employment grows.

5.0

Recommendations

The need for transit services in Wellington County is a value-based decision. Transit in rural communities is difficult to operate and typically requires larger municipal investment per trip than transit in urban areas. The level of service provided is also likely not going to change travel behaviour and reduce the number of auto trips significantly. Its primary function is to support the mobility needs of residents that do not have access to a private vehicle or cannot drive. This includes seniors, youth, persons with lower incomes and those that choose not to drive for person, environmental or medical reasons.

In a growing community such as Wellington County, the need for this type of mobility will continue to increase with population and employment growth. Over the next 20 years:

1. There will be more newcomers to the County that have come from places where transit services are common
2. The population will continue to age, and there will be more seniors that will lose their license or feel uncomfortable driving in inclement weather or at night
3. There will be more employers looking to attract labour, but will have difficulties attracting workers that don't have access to a vehicle
4. There will be more youth that are already moving away from getting their driver's license and are seeking mobility options that reduce their environmental footprint.
5. Technology will continue to evolve and will open up new shared-ride mobility options for residents that live in rural environments.

Funding for the current Ride Well service will expire in 2025. This provides the County another three years to test the concept and assess its effectiveness. Once this grant expires, the County will also be eligible for Provincial Gas Tax, which is dedicated to transit services. This will help to offset some of the municipal contribution.

The Federal Government is investing in rural transit, dedicating \$250 million to communities across Canada to support capital transit needs. This suggests that there is a shift from all governments recognizing the need for transit services in rural areas to support equitable and sustainable mobility. This is a key goal in the Wellington County RMAP, and therefore, it is recommended that the County continue to operate the Ride Well service and seek funding opportunities to sustain and grow the service over the long-term.

A number of short and long-term recommendations are identified in this report to improve public transit services in the County. Short-term recommendations build off the existing Ride Well service model and have minimal financial investment.

Long-term recommendations assess the potential to change the service model and expand based on population and employment growth.

5.1 Short-term (0-5 Years)

There are a number of short-term recommendations that the County should consider to improve the existing transit service provided. Based on the review of transit demand in Section 3.1, the On Demand transit model seems to be the best and most cost-effective service delivery option to provide a service in line with the RMAP goals. Short-term recommendations involve addressing existing corners with the service and identifying low-cost opportunities for improvement.

1. Work with On Demand Technology Provider to Integrate Ride Well with GOST, Denny, and Elliot Bus Line Service

It is recommended that the County partner with the City of Owen Sound, and Elliott Bus lines to better integrate the exiting Ride Well service with the GOST Bus and the Elliott Bus from Fergus to Guelph. The GOST Bus charges \$10 between Mount Forest and Fergus/Elora and Guelph, and \$5 for any other connection within the County along the route. This is compared to \$22.50 for a ride between Mount Forest and Guelph and \$13.08 between Fergus and Guelph. Integrating the two services would provide certain passengers with cheaper fares and allow Ride Well vehicles to focus on more short-distance trips when the fixed-route services are in operation.

It is also recommended that the County approach Denny Bus to integrate the service from Guelph to Orangeville (stopping in Erin and Hillsburgh). The existing Ride Well cost from Guelph to Erin is about \$16.00, while the Denny Bus cost is \$6.25 from Erin to Guelph, providing a more affordable mobility option for residents while freeing up Ride Well vehicles to perform other functions.

Integration with these service providers would allow them to be visible on the Ride Well app and allow passengers to make a choice when booking a trip. For example, a resident living in Fergus that wants to travel to Guelph would see multiple travel options available to them if they are interested in traveling at the time when the GOST bus or the Elliot Bus are operating. They could then choose the trip that best meets their needs (based on pick-up time, travel time and fare). The app could also be set to allow Ride Well to take residents to one of the fixed-route bus stops, and allow them to transfer onto the fixed-route service to complete their trip. This could reduce the overall passenger fare and prioritize the Ride Well vehicle for short-distance trips, freeing the vehicle to make additional trips and reduce passenger waiting time.

Passengers could still book a direct long-distance trip on Ride Well in the short-term, however, this would be at a higher fare as the trip does not take advantage of the available capacity on the fixed-route bus.

2. Expand Service Hours and Add Vehicles as Ridership Grows to Reduce Overall Notice Required to Book a Trip

As ridership continues to recover, it is recommended that a third vehicle is added to the service during peak periods to bring the service hours per capita closer to the peer average, as a way to stimulate ridership and reduce the amount of notice required to book a trip. This will help increase the attractiveness of the service, which may lead to an increase in ridership. The County would need to work with the technology service provider to determine the number of vehicles required to improve the level of service and confirm costs. The original plan for the Community Transportation Grant was for four vehicles during peak periods, so this is in line with the initial grant funding.

3. Set a Maximum Cap on Fares

One of the deterrents to ridership growth are the high fares on Ride Well, particularly on long-distance trips. The maximum existing fare for a Ride Well trip is \$40.00. This is a very high fare for someone making regular long-distance trips. Ride Well should explore opportunities to make the service more affordable, particularly for frequent trips. This could mean:

- Reducing the maximum fare to \$25 or \$30 to make it more in line with the peer group average. Currently, there are very few passengers take trips that cost more than \$20, with vehicles sitting idle. Reducing fares should see a growth in ridership.
- Develop a monthly pass that discounts trips after the tenth trip in a month. This should make the service more affordable for people that need to use the service for work trips
- Introduce discounts for a “Family Pass”, when multiple passengers are travelling together. This will make the service more affordable for individuals travelling in groups.

While it is understood that the existing On Demand technology provider cannot currently accommodate some of the above recommendations, discussions should continue to develop this feature in time for the extension of the contract in 2023 (with two additional years of funding provided by the Provincial Government). If there is no progress made, the County should consider going to RFP to see if another technology provider is able to provide this feature.

4. Assess the Potential to Purchase Accessible Electric Vehicles

One of the challenges with the existing service is that drivers are using their own vehicles to provide the service. They are compensated based on an hourly rate, including the price of fuel and maintenance. With rising fuel prices and increasing vehicle kilometres (with ridership growth), there has been some pressure to reduce the cost for drivers. One option for the County to consider is to purchase vehicles through capital funding grants, which can be leased to the operator to drive and maintain. This is a fairly common practice with municipalities that contract their transit service to a private operator. This would reduce wear-and-tear on the operator’s personal vehicle, which could potentially reduce or maintain operating costs with rising fuel prices. This may also reduce the contract rate when the contract is renewed or reissued.

Two big questions for the County to consider is whether to purchase electric and/or accessible vehicles. The use of accessible vehicles (e.g. wheelchair accessible minivans)

would reduce the need for the taxi contract, which can charge over \$100 per trip. If purchased through a government grant, the operating cost may not increase significantly if there was no additional training or licensing required by the operator.

Electric vehicles would reduce fuel costs and would help meet the County's GHG reduction targets. Use of electric vehicles is not a simple matter. There would have to be charging stations within the County, and the number of vehicle kilometres travelled by each vehicle without a charge would need to be taken into consideration. There are also few small accessible electric vehicles on the market today that can accommodate a wheelchair. This would make it difficult to achieve both GHG and accessibility objectives. It is recommended that the County conduct a further review of their fleet strategy to inform both the short- and long-term requirements and opportunities. This could be funded primarily through a Federal grant.

5.2 Long-Term (6-20 Years)

Long-term recommendations are strategic in nature and focus on opportunities to modify the service model to better meet the needs of a growing population and evolving technology. These recommendations are suggested in the 6-10 year range, but can be implemented earlier.

5. Establish Fixed-route Corridor Service on Highway 6

By 2041, the Highway 6 corridor between Mount Forest and Guelph is anticipated to have enough demand to warrant a fixed-route service operating 2 round trips per day. This service is likely to generate between 2.5 (Low forecast) to 5.4 (High forecast) boardings per hour, which is more productive than the On Demand service.

The exiting GOST and Elliot Bus Lines route should continue to be integrated, and an extra round trips should be established by the County during different operating periods so as not to duplicate these services.

The trigger to implement a second trip would be when Ride Well ridership along the corridor exceeds 3-4 boardings per hour.

6. Further Integrate On-Demand Service Fixed-Route services

On Demand transit still provides the best opportunity to provide access to all residents of the County, particularly to the rural areas that will see little demand. It is recommended that the County continue to expand its On Demand service model based on ridership demand. The target is that 90% of trips booked within 2 to 2.5 hours of the preferred pick-up time are accommodated.

It is also recommended that the On Demand service model continue to be integrated with any fixed-route services for long-distance trips. With additional north-south trips operating on the Highway 6 corridor, the On Demand app should be adjusted to redirect all long-

distance trips to this corridor, where it does not significantly increase travel time for the customer. This will further reduce the trip length of Ride Well services and help to achieve 2 to 2.5 hour notice time to book a trip. Adjustments to the fare strategy should be used to incentivize this.

7. **Expand On Demand Service and Initiate Partnership with Non-Dedicated Providers**

The County should explore potential partnerships with the Ride Well app that would allow trips to be booked on both dedicated Ride Well vehicles, fixed-route vehicles and non-dedicated vehicles. This could include vehicles used by Community Care agencies, taxis, ridesharing services. This concept is referred to as Mobility-as-a-Service, where one application is available for passengers to identify multiple travel options. To pursue this option, it is recommended that Ride Well identify the groups that would be interested in this collaborative opportunity. In addition, Ride Well should approach the On Demand technology provider to investigate how other municipalities have developed a Mobility-as-a-Service app.

8. **Continue Coordination with Community Care Agencies**

In order to continue to build the sustainability of Ride Well, it is recommended that Ride Well continue to develop partnerships with local organizations, such as Community Care. These partnerships are mutually beneficial, offering a low cost option for Community Care to meet the mobility requirements for their clients, while also reducing the County's financial contribution. Developing partnerships also eliminates duplication of similar services. Ride Well has existing partnerships with some Community Care groups, and expansion of these arrangements can help ensure the financial sustainability of Ride Well as the provincial funding commitment comes to a close. Therefore, it is suggested that no matter what service model is pursued, that Ride Well continue to develop and pursue and coordination opportunities, in so far as it does not reduce Ride Well's ability to meet customer demand.

9. **Provide Link to Region of Waterloo**

To continue improving the quality of transit service for Wellington County, the County should investigate opportunities to connect with surrounding municipalities through inter-community transit routes. A review of ridership and population growth did not identify enough demand to warrant a direct connection to the Region of Waterloo or the Town of Orangeville. Any connection to these municipalities may reduce service levels for trips within the County, as vehicles would be occupied outside of the County.

However, it is recommended the County encourage and support any connections to neighbouring municipalities provided by Guelph. There have been several proposals for an inter-municipal transit service between downtown Guelph and downtown Kitchener. The County should continue to support this service by providing connections to this route on the Ride Well app, supporting ridership growth.

5.3 Costs

The projected costs to continue to operate the transit service in Wellington County are noted below. Costs developed at a master plan level are high level, completed to provide high level estimates into future funding. The costs are based on the following assumptions:

1. All costs are in 2019 dollars and assume no change due to inflation.
2. A cost per hour of \$51 for On Demand services was used, based on the 2019 contract with Ride Well (divided by total annual operating hours). This was assumed to be an all-in cost, including software fees.
3. A cost per hour of \$80 was assumed for any fixed-route services due to higher costs of operating a larger bus.
4. Cost per service would decrease by a further 10% if vehicles were purchased and leased to the contractor.
5. The County would use the existing GOST service bus as one of the fixed-route services, thus reducing the in-house fixed-route operating costs.
6. Boardings per revenue vehicle hour would increase from 0.9 (existing) to between 1.1 and 1.5 by 2041 (Low and High ridership forecast). This was used to calculate vehicle and service hour requirements.
7. The average fare of \$9.07 would be reduced to \$6.00 to reflect the new fare policies recommended.

Operating costs are illustrated in **Table 9**.

Table 9: Costs Analysis

Cost	2019	2041 Low	2041 High
Context			
Population	103,820	136,830	136,830
Annual Ridership	6,100	21,900	39,900
Service Levels			
Service Hours	6,500	17,452	23,100
Peak On Demand Vehicles	2	5	7
Peak Fixed-Route Ride Well Vehicles	0	1	1
Costing			
Operating Costs	\$332,900	\$910,500	\$1,198,700
Average Fare	\$9.07	\$6.00	\$6.00
Passenger Revenue	\$55,300	\$131,400	\$239,400
Net Cost	\$277,600	\$779,100	\$959,300
Key Performance Indicators			
Service Hours per Capita	0.06	0.13	0.17
Cost per Capita	\$2.67	\$5.70	\$7.01
Cost per Trip	\$45.51	\$35.58	\$24.04

The costs above do not include the cost to purchase vehicles as recommended. The cost of a small cutaway vehicle is between \$150,000 and \$200,000, and the cost of an accessible minivan is between \$40,000 and \$50,000. Costs for electric vehicles would be considerably higher, but would reduce the overall operating costs. If the County elected to proceed in this direction, this would require further review. There are no electric models currently on the market today for accessible On Demand vehicles. In addition to the vehicle expansion costs noted above, spare vehicles would need to be purchased based on a 15% spare ratio.

Currently, the Economic Development department is responsible for managing Ride Well, including customer service, marketing, and working with the service provider. When the pilot ends and the service becomes more permanent, it is recommended that the County review the most appropriate department to manage Ride Well service. This could continue to be with Economic Development, or could also transfer to Engineering or Social Services. An individual should be identified as a transit lead (coordinator or manager), encompassing 50%-75% of their available time. They would be responsible for managing the contract, planning and communications to Council. Support staff would also need to dedicate some time to assist with analysis, marketing and communications.

5.4 Funding Programs

Funding is available for public transit, specifically rural transit capital projects at the federal level. A number of funds exist that provide one-time loans and grants which can be used towards specific costs for implementing aspects of a transit system. Below is information on total funding available per program, eligible organizations, eligible activities and expenses, and any challenges in accessing specific funds are noted.

5.4.1 Provincial Gas Tax Fund

If the County turns its pilot Ride Well service to a permanent service, it would be eligible for Provincial gas tax funds. Provincial gas tax is dedicated to transit and cannot be used for any other purpose. Unless otherwise approved by MTO, gas tax revenues are only provided to support municipal public transportation expenditures above the municipalities baseline spending and not to reduce or replace current levels of municipal public transportation funding.

The funding allocation that the participating municipalities receive depends on the provincial total funding envelope available, Wellington County's transit ridership and the municipal population. To calculate potential gas tax dollars that may be available to the County, 70 percent of the funding formula is based on the transit system's ridership compared to the provincial total. The remaining 30 percent is based on the population of the County relative to the provincial total (of all participating municipalities) as estimated by the Ministry of Finance through the Census. This formula provides an incentive for ridership growth and provides more support for growing municipalities.

The Ministry also reviews the annual municipal spending for each transit system to ensure that gas tax funds provided to a municipality does not exceed 75 percent of the revenue put back into the system. The municipalities own spending on transit includes municipal subsidy from property tax, passenger fares, financial donations earmarked to transportation, advertising and charter revenue, fund raising, sale of assets, etc.

The amount of gas tax funding the County could receive with the service plan is currently unknown. There is no way to calculate the estimated amount without knowing what other municipalities are receiving; however, it provides a viable revenue source to off-set some of the funding increases.

5.4.2 Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) – Public Transit Stream

Eligible recipients for the Public Transit Infrastructure Fund (ICIP) are provinces, territories, municipal or regional governments, including transit agencies or authorities. The fund is a 10 year agreement between the Provinces and the Federal Government.

Eligible investments include capital projects that modernize public transit infrastructure, or improve efficiency, accessibility, or safety. Expenditures can also include asset management capacity, design and planning, and system expansions. Federal funding can be up to 50% in Provinces of the total cost of a project.

5.4.3 Rural Transit Solutions Fund

In 2021, Infrastructure Canada has made \$250 million available in federal funds over 5 years, through the Rural Transit Solutions Fund (RTSF). Wellington County may be eligible for the RTSF, as eligible organizations are defined as “municipalities, local and regional governments established under provincial or territorial statute, including local service districts.”

Eligible activities include financing and procuring bus stops and buses, as well as zero-emission buses or vehicles. Expenditures can also include engineering or consultation fees to support maintenance, building, or improving capital assets. Infrastructure Canada will approve in advance costs that are direct and necessary for projects to be implemented.