Framing the issues, identifying the challenges and exploring the opportunities

Part 1 in the Accelerating Rural Transportation Solutions series

February 19, 2014 • 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

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RECORDING NOTICE: This webinar is recorded and will be made available to the general public on the HC Link website.
Ride Norfolk
Going your way

Simcoe ↔ Waterford

Simcoe ↔ Delhi

Local

Simcoe ↔ Port Dover

Simcoe ↔ Port Rowan

Brad Smith – Public Transportation Coordinator
Norfolk County
Norfolk County – some context

Population (2011): 63,175
- Simcoe: 14,775
- Delhi: 4,175
- Pt. Dover: 6,385
- Pt. Rowan: 1,000
- Waterford: 3,125
- Other: 33,700
Fixed route service throughout Norfolk County

Service to all “Urban Centers”

1 bus with capacity for 10 passengers as well as 2 wheelchairs
Fares

- Cash
  - In-town: $2.00
  - Out-of-Town: $6.00
- Ticket (5)
  - Out-of-Town: $5.00 ea.
- Simcoe unlimited: $6 daily
- Under 5: free
- Free transfer

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Prior to Launch

- Committee formed in 2006 (HNRTI)
  - Social Service Agencies
  - Economic Development Groups
- Conducted 3 surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Cost/Results</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spinning Your Wheels (2006)</td>
<td>What is this costing us now?</td>
<td>$1.3 – $1.9 million on transportation annually</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation Inventory (2008)</td>
<td>How are agencies doing it now?</td>
<td>Agency Vehicles, Employee Vehicles, Volunteer Drivers</td>
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<td>Public Transportation Survey (2008)</td>
<td>Do we need public transit?</td>
<td>92% there is a need 68% would use it</td>
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Why Fixed Route?

- Recommendations included in 2010 Feasibility Study (Ontario Trillium Foundation):
  - More suited to the single-County operation
  - Beginning with a fixed route serving the primary corridors will likely be more effective and generate greater ridership with less risk
  - With demand/response services, geographically scattered demand could lead to reduced ridership resulting from lower capacity and higher per trip cost (based on longer trips and fewer passengers per hour)
Why Fixed Route?

- Inclusive
  - No membership
  - No pre registration
  - No eligibility criteria
- Consistent Schedule
  - Same stops and time every week for every town
  - Reliable
- Full service information is easily advertised in one brochure
Major Route change after 4 months (Feb 2012)

• Information Sources
  – Public info - feedback
  – Email and Phone
  – Marketing push for feedback

• Triage Filter
  – Already working on it
  – Good Idea
  – What?

• 3 months of ridership detail
  – Unused stops
  – Unserved generators
  – Drivers had freedom to travel any route between communities
Service Improvements

February 2012
- Added/Changed Bus Stops
- Doubled Simcoe loop
- New Schedules

December 2012
- New (Intermediate) Stops
- No Schedule Change

• Discounted Tickets
• Free/Sponsored Weeks
• Response to public demand
• Increased service availability
• Increase to ridership

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May 6th Service

- Key issues addressed:
  - Stop Locations (ongoing)
    - Need more points of access in Simcoe
  - Consistency in schedule
    - Currently schedule is different everyday
    - Difficult to plan programming around
  - Frequency of stops
    - Long waits between stops
    - Makes the service unappealing because of long waits
Daily Trip Pattern

- 08:00 – 09:00: Out of Town Route
- 09:00 – 12:30: In Town Simcoe Service (4 Loops)
- 12:30 – 13:50: Out of Town Route
- 13:50 – 16:35: In Town Simcoe Service (3 Loops)
- 16:35 – 18:00: Out of Town Route
- 18:00: Service Ends in Simcoe
Ridership and Finances

• Ridership has responded to each system change
• Ridership up to about 20-25 per day (±3 rides/hour)
• Most of increase in Simcoe local route, but outer communities also responding

2013 Annual Budget – $165,000 (2012: $335,000)
  – Fares: $30,000 (18 percent)
  – Provincial Gas tax: $40,000 (2012: $0)
  – Municipal subsidy: $95,000 (2012: $321,000)
Lessons Learned

• Speak with other Rural Transit Providers
  • Use the experience that others have
  • You do no need to reinvent the wheel

• Understand and address community concerns:
  • Reluctant to “get on board” until success is demonstrated
  • People are afraid of the bus
  • ‘It might not stop where I want it to’
  • ‘The schedules are hard to read…’
Community Change

Transportation systems take time to develop and mature

- Culture Shift
- Process takes 2-3 years
Lessons Learned

• Three C’s
  – Customize
    • Understand customer needs
    • Balance against comprehensibility
  – Communicate
  – Connect
    • Make the service go somewhere
    • Local service and connections important
How do We Improve the Model?
"I hope this service is here for a long time"
"I am disabled and cannot get around to anywhere out of Simcoe without this service"

"We love to have a way to get to Simcoe"

"Excited about the new Ride Norfolk stop changes!!"

"I love it!! I live in Delhi and do not drive so this is perfect for me"

"The new stop at Mill Pond Court is great"

"had the pleasure of taking the bus out to Delhi & then back to Port Dover today and that service was nothing short of outstanding."
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