

## Inter-county transit system routes begin to take shape

Written By JAMES MATTHEWS

Preliminary findings show a number of benefits of a unified transit network across four counties.

Dennis Kar, a partner at Dillon Consulting Ltd., told Dufferin County council on March 12 that a transit system across Dufferin, Bruce, Grey, and Wellington counties is a boon toward a seamless experience across regions.

It boosts ridership and minimizes transfers.

The four counties and Saugeen Mobility and Regional Transit (SMART) are assessing the feasibility of a unified regional transit network.

“Demand for transit across the region continues to grow, driven by population increases, an aging demographic, and rising living costs,” according to a report to council. “At the same time, many communities have limited or no public transit options, and travel between counties without access to a personal vehicle remains challenging.”

Consultants have been assessing service needs, evaluating opportunities for service integration, and identifying a governance and implementation framework for a potential regional network.

A key focus of the study is exploring opportunities to better coordinate and integrate the region's existing transit services.

This includes examining how shared resources, such as vehicles, scheduling and dispatch systems, trip-booking platforms, administrative functions, and customer service tools, could contribute to more efficient, consistent, and sustainable service delivery.

“Outside of Orangeville, if you want to travel locally within your environment or even connect to an inter-community corridor, you have limited options to do that,” Kar said.

A unified transit study identified primary and secondary destinations.

Among the primary destinations are Guelph, Orangeville, Owen Sound, Collingwood, and the GTA via Guelph and Orangeville.

Secondary destinations include Shelburne, Fergus-Elora, Listowel, Hanover, Bruce Power, Meaford, and the Blue Mountains.

A number of commuter routes were identified within the area of those destinations.

“As part of this work, it was also important to develop a vision and guiding principles for what transit should look like should it be implemented,” Kar said.

Basically, he said, that describes what exactly is hoped to be achieved.

“Connecting communities,” he said. “Building a better future through a seamless, multi-modal transit network.”