



County Council

Meeting Date: May 9, 2023
Submitted by: Cindy Howard, General Manager of Finance and Community Services
Subject: Community Transportation Service Operator and Service Agreement

BACKGROUND:

On April 30, 2018, Middlesex County received a letter confirming our eligibility for funding for the Intercommunity Bus project up to \$1,500,000.

The Community Transportation Grant Program Transfer Payment Agreement was received on July 4, 2019 and on July 16, 2019, Middlesex County Council approved the Community Transportation Grant Program Transfer Payment Agreement for the implementation of a microtransit service connecting the communities of Thames Centre with Woodstock and London.

The County approved the Community Transportation Service Operator and Service Agreement with Voyago on January 28, 2020.

On September 21, 2020 the Community Transportation Service, Middlesex Connect was launched.

On June 28, 2021 the Province of Ontario extended the funding for the Community Transportation Grant Program for an additional two years to March 31, 2025.

ANALYSIS:

Middlesex Connect has been operating since September 21, 2020 with Voyago as the service provider. Voyago is also the service provider for a number of neighbouring Community Transportation Grant providers, including Strathroy- Caradoc, Huron Shores, Tillsonburg and Perth County.

The grant funding was initially scheduled to end effective March 31, 2023, however, the Province of Ontario has extended the grant funding to March 31, 2025. This extension is to provide recipients with additional time to fully establish their transportation services as

their communities recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and build these services up to a sustainable level.

The County's operating agreement requires extension to account for the grant funding. Community Transit Service is an ongoing service contract and unique service, with an existing renewal option that staff is recommending that the County exercise.

The Middlesex Connect service has provided transportation to residents, enabling them to access post-secondary, employment, medical appointments and social programs. There has been a steady increase in the number of riders.

In 2022, as part of the rural transit needs assessment study completed by Arcadis IBI Group, the current Middlesex Connect (Intercommunity Transportation) service was reviewed and recommendations for improvement were made. These improvements are within the amount available through the grant funding and maintain and support the existing service approach and County Council's Strategic Plan.

More information regarding the service changes and improvements have been provided to County Council in a separate report. The service agreement with Voyago will align with these changes.

Administration has worked with the Middlesex County Barrister and Solicitors Office ("MCBSO"). The MCBSO has reviewed and approves the form and content of the Agreement.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The microtransit service is fully funded through the Transfer Payment Agreement between the Province of Ontario and the Corporation of the County of Middlesex

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT a by-law be introduced at the May 9, 2023 Council meeting to:

- a. Authorize and approve the Community Transportation Service Amending Agreement with Voyago; and
- b. Authorize the Warden and the County Clerk to execute the Agreement.

Attachment