

Rural and Northern Communities Learning From Rural and Northern Communities Transportation Models in Rural and Remote Ontario

Pre-Amble:

By 2031, one-quarter of all Canadians will be 65 or older (Statistics Canada) and, according to Transport Canada, older Canadians tend to use transit more than any other age group. For those living in rural areas, lack of transportation is a top concern (Canadian Rural Partnership).

In comparison, fewer young people, aged 20-44, are choosing to live in small and rural areas. Almost 36% of the population in larger metropolitan areas is between the ages of 20 and 44, compared to rural areas where the percentage is only about 28% (Statistics Canada, 2006).

If these trends continue, in only a few decades, there will be a much higher proportion of seniors living in small towns and rural communities. Rural communities are rethinking their transportation needs, housing needs and health care needs in order to address an aging population. How can rural communities create transportation systems that will keep healthy, active seniors in their homes longer?

Challenges:

Rural communities face significant barriers to connecting with each other and learning from each other. "We were not in the transportation business. The planning and learning phase took 6 years from the time we first started to meet until we launched our first pilot transportation project in Norfolk County. We had many, many "aha" moments....things we wished we had known earlier... things we wished there had been someone else we could have talked to, the learning curve was very steep." Jayne Ryder, Ride Norfolk

Learning Session Goals:

- Rural communities that have transportation systems will share information on their transportation models including: lessons learned, challenges, successes, business plans/business models, partnership models, collaboration models, financing models, business sector involvement, impact, etc.
- Rural communities that are in the beginning stages of planning will be able to ask rural transportation leaders questions
- Rural planning committees will be aware of other models in the province, names and contacts of transportation leaders in Ontario and will know who they can call in future.

Who will participate?

- Throughout Ontario, communities are discussing Rural Transportation needs.
- Norfolk County, City of the Kawartha Lakes, Northumberland County and Wellington County have established different models of rural transportation systems that provide Rural Ontarians with transportation options covering thousands of kilometres.
- Community Leaders in Perth County, Dufferin County, Sudbury, Bracebridge and Huntsville are eager to convene and learn from these rural transportation
- The goal is to connect Sudbury, Huntsville, Bracebridge, Dufferin County and Perth/Huron Counties with Counties that have rural transportation
- Communities in the planning stage will also be asked to join in to share their learnings. The County of Oxford recently created a Master Aging Plan. Out of the Master Aging Plan, transportation was identified as a key need and priority. The County of Oxford will also be asked to attend the Stratford site to share their process, plans and learnings.