

Appendix B

Guiding Principles Workshop Summary

Prepared by LURA Consulting for
Dennis Fletcher & Associates and the City of Owen Sound

June 8th, 2021

City of Owen Sound Transit Optimization Study Guiding Principles Workshop Summary

Meeting Details

Date: Wednesday, May 26, 2021

Location: Zoom meeting

Time: 5:30pm – 7:00pm

Attendees

15 stakeholders attended the workshop, including representation from:

- Accessibility Advisory Committee
- City of Owen Sound Council
- City of Owen Sound Staff
- County of Grey Social Services
- Operations Committee

Meeting Summary

Meeting Purpose

On May 26, 2021, the City of Owen Sound hosted a virtual Guiding Principles Workshop on Zoom for its Transit Optimization Study. This workshop was the first meeting in a series of consultation opportunities. It was intended to invite key stakeholders to provide input into the development of draft Guiding Principles, which will serve as overall guidance for reviewing and evaluating the City's current transit system (the agenda is attached as Appendix A).

The key stakeholders for this workshop were comprised of City Councilors, Accessibility Advisory Committee members, Operations Committee members, City staff and project consultants (Dennis Fletcher & Associates, and TraffMobility). In total, 15 stakeholder participants were present at the workshop. Participants helped establish the draft Guiding Principles and provide input into engagement activities. By the end of the workshop, a set of draft Guiding Principles were formed.

LURA Consulting, an independent facilitation team facilitated the meeting and prepared the draft meeting summary. The summary is intended to reflect key discussion points from the meeting and is not intended to be a verbatim transcript.

Meeting Format

Dennis Kefalas (Director of Public Works & Engineering) from the City of Owen Sound provided a Land Acknowledgement to begin the meeting. Dennis Fletcher (Dennis Fletcher & Associates) presented the project overview and explained the importance of developing a set of guiding principles. Following the presentation, participants moved into breakout rooms and

collaboratively identified the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges they see currently and in the future. Participants also worked together to draft a set of ingredients for the guiding principles on what they would like transit in Owen Sound to achieve.

The two breakout rooms were brought back together as one for a group report back and discussion towards the end of the workshop. Liz McHardy (LURA Consulting) wrapped up the meeting by introducing the next steps and thanking participants for joining the workshop.

Workshop Discussion – Understanding Current Reality

In the first part of the breakout room session, participants were asked to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges they see currently and in the future for Owen Sound’s transit system. To prompt discussion, they were asked the following questions:

- What is working well?
- What is not working well?
- What opportunities exist?
- What are the challenges?

The following provides a consolidated highlight summary of the responses from both breakout rooms.

What is working well?

Participants appreciated the transit stop improvements that have been done to date, especially on covered shelters. They also liked how buses are mostly on time with good route coverage throughout the City of Owen Sound. Some also mentioned the convenience and accessibility of transit stops.

What is not working well?

Many participants were unsatisfied with the current hours of operation as it does not match well with the timing of people commuting for work. They also disliked that there no services on Sunday and thought the frequency and waiting time for buses are too long. Some also mentioned that there should be more stops at points of interest in the City, such as Harrison Park, Billy Bishop Museum, the airport and other local attractions or special events. One participant noted that taking large municipalities’ transit methods and “downsizing” them to fit Owen Sound does not work well. The transit system in the City should tailor towards local needs.

What opportunities exist?

Participants would like to see the transit system improve in a way that services the people and not just the City. They hope the study can better identify where people are and where they want to go. Some also proposed to explore the option of greening the buses through electrification, making transit operations more sustainable. Another opportunity is to look into micro-transit options such as on-demand services. Few participants also mentioned providing transit during special events such as Summer Folk Festival and hockey games.

Some participants emphasized the importance of communicating with transit users and the community to understand their needs. This will help open up more opportunities and help make transit more accessible, efficient, and user-friendly. There should be more flexible and creative ways on how rides are booked to increase ridership and efficiency. People should be able to access transit services when they need to use them. The current transit services are limited, preventing many potential users from using transit because they do not work a 9 to 5 job or live close to a transit station. Participants believed the City should also explore opportunities to make transit more affordable.

What are the challenges?

In terms of the challenges, many participants are concerned about the accessibility and affordability of transit services. Some expressed that specialized transit may be perceived as difficult to book and use, creating an extra barrier for potential users. The geography of Owen Sound also makes it challenging to travel East-West because the City is split in half by Georgian Bay. In addition, the buses are often slightly earlier than scheduled, causing people to miss the bus and have to wait for another half an hour. Participants also mentioned the lack of intercity transit connections.

Workshop Discussion – Drafting the Guiding Principles

In the second half of the breakout session, participants were invited to brainstorm individually on four ingredients for the Guiding Principles. Participants' responses were shared within their groups, and the facilitator helped cluster similar responses into different categories. A summary of the various themes and categories identified with the key ingredients listed as follows:

Smart City Solutions

- Transit connectivity within the City
- Use of smart data and intelligence technology in the system
- Multi-modal connectivity and smooth transfers
- Better data tracking and more responsive services

Building Strong Partnerships

- Building inter-city and inter-regional connections
- Collaborations with upper-tier municipalities

Health and Sustainability

- Green opportunities transit campaigns
- Climate change friendly operations
- Accessible transit as a social determinant of health
- More efficient use of fleets and decrease frequency if necessary

Financial Stability

- Leverage other revenue sources to decrease cost and keep transit affordable
- Aim for most cost-effective solutions
- Balance creativity and affordability when exploring options

Adaptability and Accessibility

- Tailor and adapt to local needs and explore user-centric solutions
- Extend services to make transit flexible and accessible to more people
- Improve accessibility and prioritize higher need users
- Providing sufficient to and from Downtown to serve local community needs

Reliable and Inclusive

- Simple and easy to use services that are welcoming, reliable, and equitable
- Provide all necessary information for riders with a good communications system
- Informative and up to date with any temporary changes
- Knowing who the current transit users are and identify potential user groups

Wrap up and Next Steps

Following the workshop discussions, Liz McHardy presented the Engagement Strategy overview. Dennis Fletcher then asked a quick question on how receptive residents of Owen Sound are towards changes that involve innovative technology. Participants responded that the situation might differ depending on the demographic groups. However, they are optimistic that the community is ready to embrace positive and beneficial changes for the transit system.

Lastly, Dennis Fletcher provided the next steps and project timeline. This study will involve a two-part engagement process, which includes two rounds of virtual Stakeholder and Public Engagement sessions and an online questionnaire. The first round of virtual Stakeholder and Public Engagement sessions is scheduled for June 22 and June 23, 2021, with the first online questionnaire available from June 22 to July 5, 2021. The second round of virtual engagement sessions is scheduled for the week of August 3 to 6, 2021, with the exact dates to be determined. The second questionnaire is planned to be available from August 3 to 17, 2021.

Liz McHardy thanked all participants for joining the workshop and closed the meeting.

Appendix A – Guiding Principles Workshop Agenda

Wednesday May 26, 5:30pm-7:00pm - Zoom Virtual Meeting

5:30p.m.	Land Acknowledgement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opening remarks / introductions / agenda review / workshop objectives
5:40p.m.	Project/Study Overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the Owen Sound Transit Route Optimization Study? Approach and Timeline
5:50p.m.	Why are we doing this? What are guiding principles? Why develop guiding principles? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are guiding principles? Why develop guiding principles? Owen Sound Strategic Plan Guiding Principles Review Transit links to priorities
6:00p.m.	Understanding our current reality - Discussion Split into groups, and discuss: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities/Challenges that you see currently and in the future: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is working well? What is not working well? What opportunities exist? What are the challenges?
6:20p.m.	Guiding Principles Ingredients 1 Individually: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write up to four guiding principles each What would you love transit to achieve?
6:30p.m.	Guiding Principles Ingredients 2 In two groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cluster similar responses, circle them, give each cluster a name Using the clusters, draft the design principles Report back and discuss (10 minutes)
6:50p.m.	Engagement Strategy Overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comments and feedback? Who should be involved?
6:55p.m.	Wrap-up and next steps
7:00p.m.	Adjourn