

COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION PILOT GRANT PROGRAM

Country: Ontario, Canada

OVERVIEW

In November 2014, Ontario Ministry of Transportation (OMT) launched the Community Transportation Pilot Grant Program (CT Program) to provide financial assistance to Ontario municipalities that partner with community organizations to optimise existing resources allocated for transportation services.

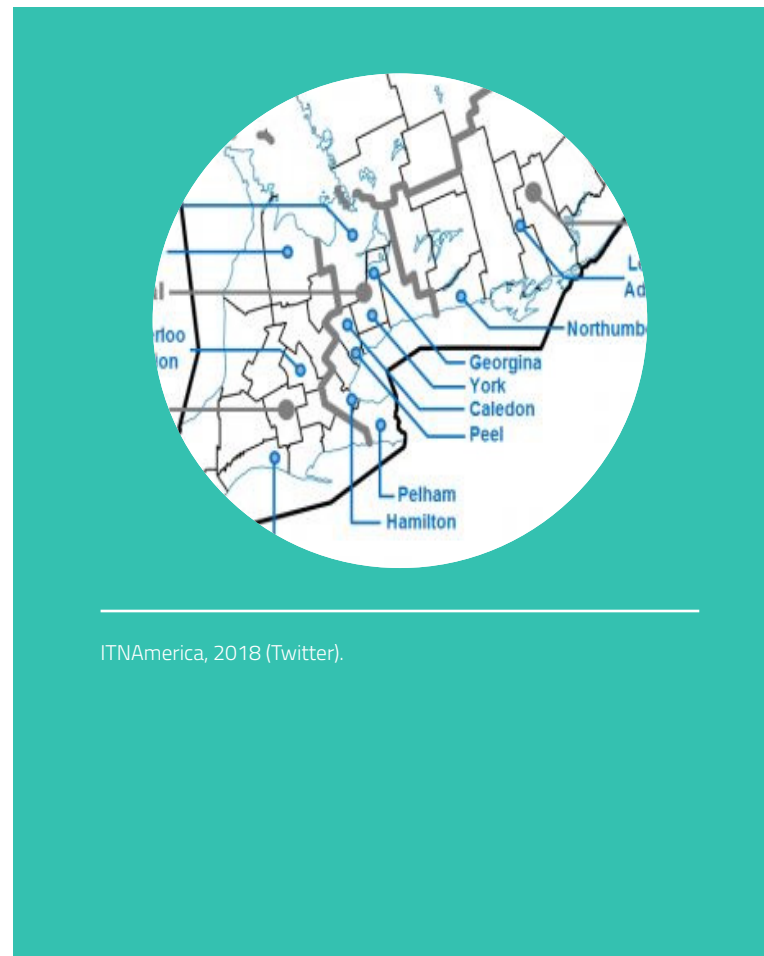
The purpose of the CT program was to evaluate the viability of a community transportation service delivery model as an effective method for meeting travel demands of small, rural, and other underserved communities in Ontario.

The program dedicated \$2M in operating and capital funding for the period of April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2017 for 22 pilots across the province. OMT has also declared that an additional \$1M in operating funding amount will have been allocated to support pilot projects continuing until March 31, 2018.

The salient elements of the CT program can be summarised as follows:

- 22 municipalities received grant funding, including 9 recipients in northern Ontario and 13 in southern Ontario;
- The majority (82%) of municipal recipients represents small (less than 50,000 inhabitants) to mid-size communities (between 50,000 and 150,000 inhabitants);
- The average funding amount was \$88,512 up to a maximum of \$100,000 which was used by the large majority of pilots to provide new services or to enhance existing transport services, although some pilots focused on centralising information, referrals, promotion and trip availability for multiple services in the community;
- The type of services provided ranged from DRT (deployed in 15 out of 22 pilots), flexible route services (deployed in 7 out of 22 pilots), fixed route-fixed schedule services and shuttle services operating on a range of service hours (typically late mornings, early afternoons and late afternoons) to serve several target groups of users such as seniors, palliative care clients, Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program clients, students, youth and children.

It is of particular interest that to roll out/improve such services a number of resource and asset sharing initiatives (regarding staff, paid drivers, vehicles and training for staff and drivers), as well as joint procurement practices (involving staff and driver



ITNAmerica, 2018 (Twitter).

training, fuel, computer hardware, trip planning/ride-share websites, etc.) were put in place.

Around 82% of pilots provided an intercommunity service, connecting residents to other municipalities in the region and/or outside of the region; relevant examples of these were:

- Community Care Northumberland (Northumberland County) which expanded its rural transportation service into rural Port Hope and Hamilton Township and offered a pilot route called the "Western Route".
- The Town of Pelham which established an all-day conventional transit service with a school bus operator that connects residents to the Niagara Region, to Niagara College, Brock University, as well as other services, such as Niagara Regional Transit and GO Transit.

The collaboration framework established among the Federal Government, Ontario Province Municipalities and rural community organisations was reported to result in a significant betterment of travel options delivered to rural communities across Ontario. Indeed, coordinated community transportation was found to create local solutions to community and regional transportation needs, especially in rural and remote areas not served or underserved by public or private transportation services.

Main aspect/issue addressed by the good practice

- Poor public transport options in rural Ontario.
- Additional limitations of the elderly with respect to driving (e.g. confidence, night-time driving, etc).
- Needs of the elderly to access healthcare, shopping, leisure and other facilities or activities.

Main objectives of the good practice

The CT program objectives are to:

- Improve mobility options for people who do not have access to their own transportation, including seniors, persons living with disabilities, youth, and other residents who need transportation.
- Build capacity to better meet local transportation demand, particularly where it is challenging or not feasible to provide conventional or specialized transit service due to population size or density.
- Create networks of coordinated community transportation service that leverages existing services and pools resources to provide more rides, to more people, and to more destinations.

DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

<i>Region</i>	<i>Target area</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Population density</i>
22 municipalities in Ontario (9 in northern Ontario, 13 in southern Ontario).	Most of the pilots focused on providing transportation service to seniors (82%), persons living on low income (59%), persons with disabilities (59%) and Local Health Integration Network clients (59%).	According to OMT's evaluation study of the CT program, pilot demonstrations were undertaken in 11 small communities (less than 50,000 inhabitants), 7 mid-size communities (between 50,000 and 150,000 inhabitants), 1 large community (between 150,000 and 500,000 inhabitants), and 3 big cities (greater than 500,000 inhabitants).	Unknown

Target user groups and needs

- The target group of users are elderly people living in small towns or rural areas requiring a transition from driving their own vehicles to seeking other forms of transport.
- Most pilots provided service to seniors (82%), people living on low income (59%), people living with disabilities (59%), and Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) clients (59%).
- Other user groups were also addressed including individuals travelling to non-urgent medical appointments and individuals who face transportation barriers due to socioeconomic factors.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

Timeframe(s)

The CT program was launched in November 2014.

Bodies involved

- The CT program is run by the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (OMT).
- Each municipality that received funding then carries out the pilots.

Mobility services provided/addressed

- 22 municipalities received funding to carry out pilots.
- The majority (82%) of municipal recipients represents small (less than 50,000 inhabitants) to mid-size communities (between 50,000 and 150,000 inhabitants).
- These pilots ranged from DRT (deployed in 15 out of 22 pilots), flexible route services (deployed in 7 out of 22 pilots), fixed route-fixed schedule services and shuttle services operating on a range of service hours (typically late mornings, early afternoons and late afternoons) to serve several target groups of users such as seniors, palliative care clients, Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program clients, students, youth and children.
- Around 82% of pilots provided an intercommunity service, connecting residents to other municipalities in the region and/or outside of the region.

Legal Framework

- The funding is for the Ontario municipalities, who then carry out the pilots in accordance with their local regulations.

Cost and Financing sources

- The program dedicated \$2M in operating and capital funding for the period of April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2017 for 22 pilots across the province. OMT has also declared that an additional \$1M in operating funding amount will have been allocated to support pilot projects continuing until March 31, 2018.
- The average funding amount was \$88,512 up to a maximum of \$100,000.
- Costs relating to each individual pilot are not known.

Organizational set-up

- The collaboration framework was established among the Federal Government, Ontario Province Municipalities and rural community organisations.

Supporting technologies

- Unknown for each pilot.

INNOVATION ASPECTS

ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

N/A

LEVEL OF PUBLIC SECTOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Unknown if additional funding was required for each pilot.

INTERCONNECTIONS BETWEEN SHARED AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES

The type of services provided ranged from DRT, flexible route services, fixed route-fixed schedule services and shuttle services operating on a range of service hours to serve several target groups of users such as seniors, palliative care clients, Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program clients, students, youth and children.

ICT CONNECTIONS AND IMPACTS OF THE TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS IMPLEMENTED

N/A

OTHER (E.G. SOCIAL INNOVATION, ETC.)

N/A

ASSESSMENT

Ridership and other key metrics/results (through key-indicators, where applicable)

- According to the OMT's evaluation study, the CT Program resulted in significant transportation service improvements in participating communities such as over 28,831 passengers served over a 12-month period, more than 105,297 passenger trips provided over a 12-month period, 25,172 rides provided to seniors over a 12-month period, 416 new destinations and 89 municipalities served.
- The CT Program has also helped to enhance existing services for nine pilots leading to:
 - Average of 69% increase in the total number of clients served in a year.
 - On average, the total number of rides in a year has increased three times with the help of CT Program funding.
 - Seven new municipalities provided with service.
 - In relation to specific transport benefits, according to an OMT evaluation survey:
 - 100% of participating communities reported that the program had a high or moderately high impact on improving mobility for individuals without access to their own personal method of transportation;
 - 78% of participating communities indicated that the program had a high or moderately high impact on providing a new service where none existed before;
 - 77% of pilots reported that the program had a high or moderately high impact on increasing service capacity.
 - According to the OMT's evaluation survey, the CT Program had a high or moderately high impact on connecting people to other existing transportation services, systems or modes with the top three connecting services or modes being municipal transit systems; regional transit system; and passenger air, marine, water taxi/ferry, and other modes.

Good Governance

- The key findings of a comprehensive OMT's CT program evaluation study were that:
 - "Piloting communities customized transportation service to meet their community's unique needs using community resources;
 - Pilot partnerships strengthened community networks and improved the administration of transportation services; and
 - Sharing resources and assets increased transportation capacity and mobility options for smaller communities".

Success factors/strengths

- The initiative relies heavily on volunteers which strengthens the community aspect of such initiatives.
- The scheme provides support to seniors on low incomes who might otherwise face social exclusion because of their limited mobility options.

Difficulties encountered/weakness

- Difficulties or weakness of each scheme were not available.

FEATURES THAT ARE CONSIDERED TO BE GOOD PRACTICE (LESSON(S) LEARNT)

- A good example of how a centralised collaborative working approach among Federal government, local authorities and local community organisations can deliver better community transportation services for rural areas.
- 22 pilots with lots of evidence but individual pilot results have not been disclosed, only aggregated program results are available. Program results seem very promising.

Key references

- www.octn.ca/ct-pilot-program/community-transportation-pilot-grant-program
- www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca/file.aspx?id=a98f91b2-6ee9-41cd-bb2a-f793a27c6f53
- <https://pelham-pub.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=5381>