

## NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release – May 8, 2023

### **‘IGNITING CONNECTIONS’ Community Outreach Findings for Southeast Manitoba Transit Opportunities**

The Southeast Regional Transportation Initiative (SERTi) led by the RM of Piney and Eco-West Canada, completed its needs assessment of transit service in Southeast Manitoba (east of the Red River and south of the TransCanada Highway). The community outreach phase gathered critical feedback from community residents, businesses and leaders, to better understand the region’s ridership profile, priorities and barriers. The results will form the basis for determining transit needs and possible solutions across a wide region covering over 17 municipalities and First Nation communities.

Having a focused, regional transit strategy in place will **ignite connections** for residents of all ages and in particular the area’s vulnerable populations, allowing rural communities to thrive and grow.

#### **Survey Results**

Over 1,000 online and paper surveys, made available in French and English, have been collected from partners, RMs of De Salaberry, Hanover, La Broquerie, Piney, Reynolds, Ritchot, Stuartburn, Ste. Anne, Taché; Town of Ste. Anne; Village of St. Pierre-Jolys; Buffalo Point First Nation and the Steinbach Economic Development (SED) Corporation. The results were presented at the 2023 Association of Manitoba Municipalities conference. Key Findings include:

#### **Ridership Profile**

- Majority of respondents (78%) have their own vehicle with few other options available to get around.
- Of those with their own vehicle, 26% noted they may also travel with a friend or family. Less common was to pay a fee for a personal driver, use a of taxi or other modes such as carpooling, walking, bicycling, or car rental.
- Winnipeg and Steinbach are the most frequently identified urban destinations that rural respondents travel to.
- 33% (1/3) of respondents indicated that they were not satisfied with current transportation options, with another 13% indicating a neutral stance.

#### **Transportation Priorities**

##### Daily Travel

- Work is the primary purpose for daily travel (approx. 40%), followed by Shopping and Services (26%).

##### Weekly or Monthly Travel

- Shopping and Services rank the highest (39%-52%) on a weekly or monthly basis.
- Medical purposes ranked highest for monthly travel (18%).

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## **Transportation Value and Benefits**

Of the satisfied respondents, alternative transportation options would be considered primarily:

- if it was affordable,
- to avoid parking issues,
- if vehicle is unavailable,
- to avoid winter or night driving,
- if schedule fit their needs, and
- for driving support when they are no longer able to drive.

Most noted benefits of transportation options included:

- support for other family members in a one vehicle family,
- financial savings of driving or a second vehicle,
- environmental benefits, reduce carbon footprint, EVs and supporting infrastructure,
- freedom/convenience/peace of mind,
- ability to age in their own community and support to get to medical appointments or elsewhere,
- socialization/interaction - meeting new people, community connections, and
- alternative if vehicle is unavailable, unreliable, or unable to drive due to illness/treatment.

## **Next Steps**

The survey results offered insightful findings into the needs of rural communities and validated the need for a regional transportation plan. The next phase of the project will be for Eco-West Canada to present potential transportation solutions to key stakeholders. Consideration will be given to overwhelming community feedback on issues around affordability, scheduling, services, destinations, and environment.

SERTi continues to be supported by a collaborative partnership between key stakeholders and experts including TONS (Transportation Options Network for Seniors), the University of Manitoba - City Planning (Age Friendly Communities), municipal and First Nation leadership, local businesses, and Eco-West Canada and the RM of Piney as project leads.

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## **Municipal Opportunity**

The RM of Ritchot has invited other partners to join in their early pilot application to pilot a car share program in their respective communities. A federal capital grant is available to support purchases of vehicles for rural transit and another for project pilots.

For more details about the Southeast Regional Transportation Initiative in Southeast Manitoba, contact:

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