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THE GREY-BRUCE This Week

GREY BRUCE THIS WEEK

Voyago hired for twice-daily bus service to Guelph

and back to Owen Sound

DENIS LANGLOIS

Coun. Scott Greig says Owen Sound's planned twice-daily bus service to and from Guelph - expected to launch in the new year - will open up a "world of opportunity" for people.

"I hope it's well-received by the community here and all the towns in between and at Guelph. Hopefully, it's nothing but a positive first step here for years of success," he said, before a council vote Oct. 28 to contract London-based Voyago to provide the inter-community transportation service from January 2020 to March 31, 2023.

Greig said once in Guelph, riders will have many public transit options to get to other cities.

"You can be down in Toronto on the GO, you can be off to Peter-

borough or Ottawa on VIA. It's a world of opportunity for people," he said.

The city's 39-month contract with Voyago will cost \$1.02 million, plus about \$207,000 in fuel costs.

Owen Sound will be receiving \$1.24 million from the Ministry of Transportation's Community Transportation Grant Program to fund the service.

The city is expecting to have at least \$124,000 left over from the grant, after factoring in a "conservative estimate" of \$162,500 in revenue, that it will use to advertise and promote the service.

Voyago is planning to offer two round trips - one in the morning and another in the afternoon - each day between Owen Sound's downtown transit terminal and Guelph.

The first bus is to depart Owen Sound at 7:15 a.m., with the last leaving Guelph around 5:30 p.m.

Voyago's buses, which will be fully accessible and seat 20 to 22 passengers, will make stops in seven towns - Chatsworth, Williamsford, Durham, Mount Forest, Arthur, Fergus and Elora - between Owen Sound and Guelph.

Each trip is expected to take about two hours and 15 minutes. A trip from Owen Sound to Guelph will cost passengers \$20 to \$24, Kefalas said in a report to council.

The former provincial Liberal government approved Owen Sound's application in April 2018 for \$1.24 million over five years from the Community Transportation Grant Program to finance the Owen Sound-to-Guelph service.

In January, the Progressive Con-

servative government confirmed the city's funding would still be coming.

The city issued a request for proposals June 21 for a transit operator. Two bids were received, but neither was compliant with the RFP.

Owen Sound then entered into negotiations with a specific carrier, which has now been identified as Voyago, a company owned by Transdev Canada.

Mayor Ian Boddy said the city is excited to reach this stage of awarding the contract for the transportation service.

"We've got the funding that we're very appreciative of. We wouldn't be able to do it without the provincial funding," he said in an interview.

"And now we're finally there that we're getting going with two buses back and forth per day. It's great for all the towns between here and Guelph as well that can ride back and forth and make use of that.

"And it's great for our residents to have better bus services than we've had for the last number of years."

Regards,
Fred & Gail