T:GO Intown Communications and Marketing Plan

With the T:GO system converting from an on-demand service to a fixed route, fixed schedule system on August 20th, a communications and marketing plan needs to be implemented to ensure key messages about the system are communicated to potential users. Key messages need to reach all residents within Tillsonburg using a variety of media sources and be geared towards different demographics such as seniors, students, and adults. Key messages need to include information on the new routes, where and when they can get on the bus, fare media and where it can be purchased, plus where to find additional information about T:GO. All marketing material will include the T:GO logo as brand recognition for the transit service in Tillsonburg.

The communications and marketing plan will utilize the following resources and techniques:

- **Posters and brochures at Community Boards and Retail Locations:** Posters will be created to promote the change to a fixed route system and include information on the fares, where to get a map/brochure, where to obtain a bus pass and basic information such as the hours of operation. There are public information boards throughout the Town at Seniors Centres, Community Centres, Library, retailers, etc, where posters can be posted for people to read. In addition to this, we will be asking retailers to make available brochures so people can pickup them up and distribute them further to potential customers. Posters need to draw the attention of interested people and are good for providing consistent information to people for a couple of months. Posters are a good and inexpensive way to get information out to the public for a longer period of time.
  
  - *Est. Cost:* The estimated cost for this is $550 for 2,500 brochures and posters.

- **Town’s Facebook Page:** The Town’s Facebook page is a good media source to interact directly with residents. The Facebook page will be used to provide information on the date of the change to the fixed route system, the fares, and where residents can purchase the fares plus promotion of the T:GO webpage to get more information. When the bus stop signs start going up, questions will start to come in about the changes and Facebook is an excellent tool to explain what changes are coming. Facebook posts need to be simple and short messages to effectively utilize it as a promotion tool. Facebook is good to get information out fast, however is short term advertising and is good for promoting a change or updating information. This advertising method is an inexpensive and effective method for targeted different demographics such as students.
  
  - *Est. Cost:* There is no additional cost for this advertising.
- **Town’s website**: The Town’s website has a news page that can be used to keep residents informed of the changes to the T:GO system. A simple news release can include when the changes are starting, where to purchase passes and the types of passes available, where to get brochures, etc. Plus the link to the T:GO website can be promoted for residents to find more specific and detailed information on the service. This method is an inexpensive method of providing a lot of information to everyone interested.
  
  o *Est. Cost: There is no additional cost for this advertising.*

- **Town’s Newsletter**: The Town uses the local paper to include information on what is happening in Tillsonburg. The changes to the system can be promoted in this publication and provide links to the T:GO website for additional information. The Town has an ongoing publication contract with the local paper, making it an inexpensive method of promoting T:GO to residents in Tillsonburg.
  
  o *Est. Cost: This costs approximately $200 for a quarter of the ad space.*

- **Local Newspapers**: Newspapers are good for delivering a consistent message over a longer period of time. Papers such as Snapd promote that readers keep the paper in their homes for 1 to 4 weeks and that readers will read the paper several times a month. Circulation of papers varies based on free delivers to households such as the Lakeshore Shopper and free papers that are picked up at a variety store such as Snapd. The cost of advertising in newspapers is increasing. Papers are increasing their circulation areas making them effective for regional advertising.
  
  o *Est. Cost: It costs approximately $800.00 for a half page ad for one publication.*

- **Community Events**: Participation at Community Events such as the Tillsonburg Fall Fair, Home Show, Ribfest and Turtlefest are excellent opportunities to talk one on one with potential customers, answer any specific questions people have about the service, hand out brochures, promote the system by offering a free bus pass for people interested in trying the transit system, plus have the bus at the event for people to actually get on the bus, walk around it and see firsthand the features on the bus. This will assist with any uncertainty of how to ride the transit system in Tillsonburg. This method costs more to provide the bus and staff time, however is very effective in directly answering questions and providing information on a one on one basis.
  
  o *Est. Cost: It costs approximately $500 a day for this promotion and plan to attend two events this fall for a total cost of $1,000*
• **Promotional Passes:** Promotional Passes or Free bus passes is a good way for interested residents to ride the bus with no cost commitment, just their time. It provides them a chance to explore the Town and the Transit service and hopefully get a good impression of the transit service and tell others about their experience. Promotional passes can be handed out at Community Events such as Turtlefest, and handed at other community interactions such a visit to a school to talk to a class about Transit. There is minimal cost for this and is a good promotional tool to get people on the bus that may not consider the bus as a transportation option.

  o *Est. Cost:* Each pass has a retail value of $2.50 and can cost $250 if we had out 100 passes at events.

• **Google Advertising:** This is a simple and effective way to promote T:GO within Tillsonburg. Websites such as the Weather Network utilize Google Ads from recent searches plus the location of the device from its IP address to direct the ad to the individual device. The ads can promote the system plus direct people to the T:GO website to get more specific information. This kind of advertising is good for reaching out to tech savvy adults and students at a relatively inexpensive cost. This is good for promoting changes or refreshing interesting in the system as it is short term advertising.

  o *Est. Cost:* The payments are based on traffic to the website. A budget of $300 will be used over a 3 month period.

• **Rogers TV:** Rogers TV is always looking for community news and things that are happening within Oxford County. Staff can work with Rogers TV to produce a documentary series on the transit system explaining the routes, the bus, hours of service, etc. There is minimal cost for this promotion as Rogers TV is a community service that is often seeking information in the community. Reruns make this a good low cost promotional tool.

  o *Est. Cost:* There is no additional cost for this advertising.

• **Visit Senior Centres and Homes:** Seniors Centres typically have social and information events where they invite people to come in and talk about a variety of topics. Seeking out these opportunities to attend a coffee socials, lunch, etc gives the opportunity to give a presentation and to talk to people about the service. This kind of interaction gives the opportunity to talk one on one with potential clients about their specific needs, concerns and perceptions of the system and discuss how the transit system can meet their needs. There can be minimal costs associated with this kind of community engagement for small items such as coffee and cookies for the social meeting and staff time.

  o *Est. Cost:* Approximately $50 per visit for items such as coffee and promotional passes. The intent is to do 4 visits for a cost of $200.00
• **School Information Packages:** Working with the local school boards, information can be provided in school packages, whether its newsletters, pamphlets, posters, etc to provide information to students about the transit system in Tillsonburg. This is a good method to focus material specifically at students at little cost.
  
  o *Est. Cost:* There is no additional cost for this advertising as brochures are already printed.

• **Radio Advertising:** Radio is a good method to get a message out to a certain audience over a short period of time. Radio stations have information on their listener demographics and times of peak listeners to target advertising. Radio advertising can be expensive in comparison to other forms of media, however reaches an audience in a wide area in a short period of time.
  
  o *Est. Cost:* Costs vary, but can be up to $5,000 for a two week campaign on two radio local radio stations.

• **Billboards:** Billboards are good at getting messages out to motorists as they are often found along roadsides. The message is a static display poster that is often displayed for a period of three months or longer depending on the budget available. This method is expensive in comparison with other forms of media but is targeted to motorists travelling by the billboard. This kind of advertising is good for regional wide advertising campaigns.
  
  o *Est. Cost:* The minimum package is 3 different billboards for $3,125 a month.

• **Rinkboards:** Rinkboards are similar to billboards and are targeted to people at arenas. The Town has access to two hockey rinks and one outdoor rink that advertising can be placed on. This is good for long term advertising campaigns to a focused audience, typically adults and students and is relatively cost effective in comparison to other advertising.
  
  o *Est. Cost:* The cost ranges from $430 to $710 per year depending on the rink.

• **Media Releases:** Media releases are good to give information to the public about news happening and are often used to kick off an advertising campaign. Media releases are released by the Town to provide information; however it is up to the individual media service (radio, TV, newspaper) to pickup the information and decide if they are news worthy. This often depends on current events happening that day and whether these media services wish to inform people in their news broadcasts. This is an inexpensive method to get information out, however relies on the media to choose to share this information or not and involves staff time responding to media information requests.
  
  o *Est. Cost:* There is no additional cost for this advertising.
The communications and marketing plan will need to continue to promote the transit system after the launch date of the fixed route within the assigned advertising and promotions budget. Advertising campaigns need to continue throughout the year using a variety of techniques listed above to remind people of the benefits of the T:GO system offers to increase ridership. Campaigns need to align with events throughout the year such as back to school, Christmas, and seasonal changes such as spring, and summer to promote the benefits of using public transit.

For the changes starting on August 20th, the plan is to utilize Posters and brochures at Community Boards and Retail Locations, Town’s Facebook Page, Town’s website, Town’s Newsletter, Community Events such as the Tillsonburg Fall Fair, Google Advertising, Promotional Passes and a Media Releases to create a buzz about the changes. We will start to visit Senior Centres and Homes and provide information in School Information Packages when they become available. Promotional passes will be handed out at community events such as the Tillsonburg Fall Fair and visits to senior centres to interested individuals to let them try the service at no cost. With the fixed route service starting on August 20th, the Town can allow people who purchase a September monthly bus pass to ride for free for the remainder of the month of August. This will encourage the sale of monthly passes and extend the value of the pass. The total cost of this campaign is anticipated to be $2,500.

To continue the advertising campaign within the service area of T:GO, campaigns will consider the use of Rinkboards when they become available, continue with Posters and brochures at Community Boards and Retail Locations while continuing to visit Senior Centres and Homes and advertising in local Newspapers. Should the opportunity arise for Rogers TV or local radio interviews, this will be included in the campaigns.

A good communications and marketing campaign will also assist in building ridership and increasing revenue from fares. Ridership trends will be monitored to show the effectiveness of the advertising and marketing campaign. As the system continues to grow, the advertising and marketing campaign needs to increase to meet the demands of the changing community and make the system a success.