

Celebrating Five Years Serving Shelburne County



WHO WE ARE

Sou'West Nova Transit Association (SWNT) is a registered charity that exists to provide door-to-door, accessible transportation options to Shelburne County residents with a focus on those who have barriers due to age, health, mobility, financial hardship, and lack of supports.

WHY WE EXIST

Access to affordable or subsidized transportation involves so much more than just moving people from one place to another. Supporting physical and mental health, reducing isolation, building networks and discovering options for funding and help, and assisting individuals in maintaining their independence and staying in their homes longer are just some of the ways that SWNT works toward **our vision: to help create communities where everyone can access the services and opportunities they need to lead healthy, connected lives.**

LESSONS FROM THE ROAD

September
2017

It was five years ago that Sou'West Nova Transit launched, on a mission to help those with transportation barriers in Shelburne County to get where they needed to go locally and throughout the province. Since that time, many lessons have been learned about topics like scheduling, commercial regulations, vehicle maintenance and insurance. But some of the best and most important lessons were about the **VALUE** of transportation, which it turns out has very little to do with getting from Point-A to Point-B:

Lesson 1 – The value of access: We live in a province that has a wide variety of services available to residents, offering opportunities and assistance in areas of health, finances, civic and charitable involvement, employment, entertainment and recreation, and more. Especially in areas where walking is not an option even for local opportunities and some services might be located several hours away, the value of transportation comes from providing **ACCESS** to those who might otherwise miss out on chances to connect and thrive that are just beyond their reach.

Lesson 2 – The value of networking: In rural areas, few make a choice to not own and operate a vehicle themselves if the option exists. As such, employment and financial challenges, issues related to health, mobility or age, and lack of family support can often accompany long-term transportation barriers. Through connecting with other local and provincial organizations, Sou'West Nova Transit has been able to play a part in creating more comprehensive solutions for riders who can benefit from more than just a lift, and connecting them to supports they might not have otherwise been aware of.



IMAGE: Former President David Meyer (passed away in 2014) and Director Barb Henderson Townsend at our launch event in 2012. (Photo Credit – Cheryl Graul)

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Lesson 3 – The value of independence and inclusion: Lack of transportation can be limiting and disheartening, requiring those affected to rely on the kindness and availability of family, friends and neighbours to get where they need to go. In the absence of those supports, it might even make it necessary for them to leave their homes to move closer to services or, for some seniors, to go into long-term care if no other options exist. Rural transportation helps give riders an option to remain in their homes longer and be a more active part of their communities.

Lesson 4 – The value of connection: Long-term lack of transportation can have a very isolating effect. And so some of the most important work done by rural transportation providers is not just getting a rider from their home to their destination, but the connections made and friendships formed between passengers and drivers on the journey in between.

Lesson 5 – The value of partnerships: We celebrate a wide variety of partnerships that have formed since SWNT's inception:

- Other rural transit organizations in Nova Scotia that blazed the trail and continue to cooperate and advocate;
- Board members that first recognized the need and took steps to meet it, and now give their time and effort to help grow our impact;
- A staff and volunteer team that genuinely care about the health of our community and well being of our passengers;
- The services in our network that work alongside us, and provide help and opportunities for our riders in areas beyond our scope;
- Provincial and local governments as well as individuals and organizations who recognize that investing financially in transportation is really investing in helping Shelburne County residents live healthier, more connected lives.



These partnerships are what have made our last five years on the road a reality, and what make the next five years and beyond a possibility.

Sou'West Nova Transit wishes to thank all of those who have been a part of our mission to provide accessible, subsidized transportation to Shelburne County residents, understanding the true value - of access, networking, independence, and connection - that their partnership has provided to the people and communities we serve!

IMAGE: Current President Howard Roszel and his wife Anne, also volunteer drivers, at our launch in September of 2012. (Photo credit – Cheryl Gaul)

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