The Village of South River
63 Marie Street, P.O. Box 310, South River, Ontario, P0A 1X0
Ph: (705) 386-2573 Fax: (705) 386-0702 e-mail: clerk@southriver.ca

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South River Local Rideshare/ Transit Project and

Ontario Transit Investment Fund (OTIF) Application

The Village of South River wishes to provide a public update on the status of its South River Local Rideshare/Transit Project and Ontario Transit Investment Fund (OTIF) Application, submitted to the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) in June 2025.

The proposed project aims to establish an affordable, reliable local transportation service, particularly to provide First Mile/Last Mile connections to Ontario Northland's returning Northlander passenger rail service, benefiting South River and the broader Almaguin region.

Following Ministry feedback in August 2025, the Village promptly revised its application and submitted all requested supporting documentation, including letters of support from neighbouring municipalities, community organizations, and regional stakeholders.

On October 7, 2026, Village representatives met with MTO officials regarding the application. The Ministry indicated that funding may be available but expressed concerns about potential duplication with the Provincial Rideshare Framework (Northlander Phase). The officials were clear that OTIF would not support subsidizing a municipal rideshare operation as we proposed. The Ministry suggested considering alternative transportation models or revising the proposal to address service gaps through means other than rideshare.

The Village recognizes these alternatives; however, operating conventional buses or minibuses would involve significant upfront costs, maintenance, insurance, dispatching, driver wages, and ongoing operational expenses. Such financial commitments would place a considerable burden on municipal taxpayers. The Village believes that a rideshare-based model offers a more flexible and cost-effective solution that can respond to local transportation demand while minimizing long-term financial obligations for municipal taxpayers.

In correspondence dated October 14, 2026, MTO confirmed that Uber Canada and Uride Technologies Inc. are approved to operate in South River. However, the Ministry also confirmed that approved operators are not required to provide any minimum level of service, meaning approval does not guarantee actual transportation availability.

The Village has actively pursued cooperation with transportation providers, including initial inquiries in March 2025. More recently, Village officials contacted both provincially approved operators, Uber Canada and Uride Technologies Inc., as well as Y Drive App, to explore potential service opportunities in South River. To date, Uber has provided only automated responses, while Uride has confirmed that the Village's inquiry has been forwarded to the appropriate team. Y Drive App is listed as approved to operate in Huntsville, North Bay, and Greater Sudbury, but South River is not currently listed among its approved service areas. The Village has also contacted Y Drive App to explore its interest in expanding service to the community and is awaiting a response. The Village remains willing to cooperate with and support any qualified transportation provider interested in serving South River and the surrounding region.

The Village's primary concern is the potential lack of reliable local rideshare or transit connections when the Northlander passenger rail service returns. Limited access to the South River station could affect passenger utilization and undermine the long-term benefits of the rail service for South River and communities throughout the Almaguin region.

The Village's objective is not to duplicate existing transportation services but to ensure that reliable transportation is actually available to residents and visitors. The Village remains committed to working with the Province, Ontario Northland, approved operators, and neighbouring municipalities to find a financially sustainable solution.

The Village's priority remains ensuring that South River and the broader Almaguin region have access to reliable, affordable, and sustainable local transportation connections when the Northlander passenger rail service returns, without placing an unreasonable financial burden on municipal taxpayers.

The Village will continue to work collaboratively with the Province, Ontario Northland, approved transportation operators, and regional partners to achieve this objective and will provide further public updates as information becomes available.

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For more information contact
Don McArthur, Clerk Administrator
Village of South River
clerk@southriver.ca
705-386-2573 ext 104