

# Dufferin Hi-Land Trail Angels - Annual Report

John van Nostrand – 3 August 2025

This was my second year coordinating the Dufferin Hi-Land Trail Angels. We currently have five volunteer drivers: Leah Pressey, Phyllis Robson, Pauline Lloyd, Carl Alexander and John van Nostrand. Hikers can request our service through the club website: <https://dufferinbrucetrailclub.org/trail-angels/> Requests for rides are assigned based on the availability of the driver and their proximity to the pickup and drop-off points. In lieu of payment, hikers are asked to make a donation to the Dufferin Hi-Land Bruce Trail Club.

Over the past year we have logged the following results:

- Total number of rides 101
- Total number of passengers 230
- Average number of passengers per ride 2.3
- Rides per month in peak months 14 to 20
- Rides per month in winter months 0 to 2

The total number of rides was 4% higher than last year and the number of passengers was up 7%. This was better than expected, since the trails were closed in April after the ice storm. However, the closure in April might have resulted in higher numbers in May and June.

Most of the hikers who use our service are attempting to complete end-to-end hikes of the main trail. They often drive an hour or two to get here, from places like Hamilton, St. Catharines or Owen Sound. Typically hikers book rides for three 20 km hikes, or four 15 km hikes. Once they complete the Dufferin Hi-Land section, they move on to other sections of the trail. The individual hikes are usually spread over several weeks, but sometimes are booked over two or three days in a row, when the hikers stay at a B&B or cottage. Few of the members of the Dufferin Hi-Lands club use this service.

A typical pickup and drop off for a hike of 15 km of the trail requires about 40 km of driving and takes between 45 minutes and 1 hour to complete. By comparison, an end-to-end hike of 55 km results in about 80 km of driving and takes about 1.5 hours to complete. Based on these estimates, in the past 11 months our team has volunteered between 80 to 100 hours of their time and driven between 4,000 and 5,000 km in support of the Dufferin Hi-Land Trail Angel Program.

Over the past year the treasurer has been sending me lists of the donations received by DHBTC that were made for trail angel rides. A typical donation to the DHBTC for a short hike of 10 or 15 km is about \$20. For longer end-to-end hikes or multiple days resulting in completion of the 55 km distance, the typical donations are \$80 to \$100. If all of these hikers were donating to DHBTC, then we should be generating over \$2000 of donations. However, this year, the total donations specifically designated for trail angel rides were \$ 1310.

There are several ways to interpret this discrepancy:

1. Hikers have had difficulty finding the link to donate,
2. Hikers may be donating to DHBTC but have not indicated that the donations are for Trail Angel rides,
3. Hikers may not know how much to donate and delay until they forget,
4. Some of the hikers may like to ride for free (donations are voluntary).

## Conclusions

I think we provide a good, reliable Trail Angel service that our hikers are happy with. However, I think we need to improve the Trail Angel portal to capture the booking details and draw attention to donation options within the same form. We could also recommend a suggested donation rate for 10, 15, or 20 km hikes.

Currently the Trail Angel web page lists all the booking requirements in fine print, but the actual booking portal uses the "Contact Us" form that is the messaging service used by 15 different volunteer coordinators. This blank message form does not prompt the hikers to list the date, time, pickup and drop off locations or number of passengers and makes no reference to the different options for donations. Additionally, linking the donation option to a credit card payment system could simplify the donation process. These steps might encourage our hikers to participate more in donating to the DHBTC Trail Angel program, and allow for more efficient tracking and allocation of these donations.