



REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO

**REGIONAL TRANSIT COMMITTEE AGENDA
SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA**

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2018
1:00 P.M.**

Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Boardroom

<u>PAGE NO.</u>	<u>REPORTS</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
2-3	Deneve Vanderwolf, Regional Transit Coordinator – January 2018 Ridership Table	Receive
4-11	Deneve Vanderwolf, Regional Transit Coordinator – Passenger Transportation Board Greyhound Canada Application Decision	Receive

NEW BUSINESS

ADJOURNMENT



Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Regional Transit Committee Memo

To: Chair Bachrach and Regional Transit Committee
From: Deneve Vanderwolf, Regional Transit Coordinator
Date: February 20, 2018
Re: January 2018 Ridership Table

The attached table summarizes January 2018 ridership by Municipality and Electoral Area / First Nation. Passenger counts include riders boarding the bus at stops located within their respected areas, numbers may include more than one bus stop.

Route 162 (Burns Lake-Smithers) saw its highest ridership yet with 230 passenger boardings. This is a 66% increase in ridership.

Route 161 (Burns Lake - Prince George) had the second highest month on record with 361 passenger boardings.

I would be pleased to answer any questions.

Recommendation:

(all/directors/majority)

That the Regional Transit Committee receive the Regional Transit Coordinators memo dated February 20, 2018 titled 'January 2018 Ridership Table'.

2018 Ridership **3**

Municipality/Electoral Area	Jan-18
Route 161 Burns Lake - Prince George	
Electoral Area "B" Burns Lake Rural Wet'suwet'en First Nation	21
Burns Lake/Lake Babine Nation/Burns Lake Band	81
Electoral Area "D" Fraser Lake Rural Stellat'en First Nation/Nadleh Whut'en	24
Fraser Lake	30
Vanderhoof/Saik'uz First Nation	40
RDFFG - Electoral Area "C" Beaverly	2
Prince George	163
Total Passengers	361
Average per day	28
Route 162 Burns Lake - Smithers	
Electoral Area "B" Burns Lake Rural Wet'suwet'en First Nation	20
Burns Lake/Lake Babine Nation/Burns Lake Band	34
Electoral Area "G" Houston Rural	3
Houston	87
Electoral Area "A" Smithers Rural	0
Telkwa	3
Smithers	83
Total Passengers	230
Average passengers per day	18
162 Midday Run- Departs Smithers 11:30 am Departs Houston at 1:00 pm	
Houston	7
Electoral Area "A" Smithers Rural	0
Telkwa	1
Smithers	18
Total Passengers	26
Average passengers per day	2



Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Regional Transit Committee Memo

To: Chair Bachrach and Regional Transit Committee
From: Deneve Vanderwolf, Regional Transit Coordinator
Date: February 21, 2018
Re: Passenger Transportation Board Greyhound Canada Application Decision

On February 21, 2018 the Passenger Transportation Board made a decision regarding Greyhound Canada's Application to reduce service on several routes in British Columbia.

The Prince George to Prince Rupert route will be eliminated as of June 1, 2018. Attached is the complete list of routes affected by the decision and the pages from the decision document pertaining to the route from Prince George to Prince Rupert. The complete decision document (128 pages) is available upon request.

I would be pleased to answer any questions.

Recommendation: **(all/directors/majority)**

That the Regional Transit Committee receive the Regional Transit Coordinators memo dated February 21, 2018 titled 'Passenger Transportation Board Greyhound Canada Application Decision.



Intercity Bus Application Notice

Greyhound Canada Application No. 256-17

Status Approved as set out in the Decision

Decision [256-17 Decision of FEB 20 2018](#)

- [Decision Backgrounder](#)

Applicant Greyhound Canada Transportation ULC

Proposal **Eliminate the routes listed below:**

- I1: Dawson Creek - Fort Nelson
- I2: Fort Nelson - Yukon Border & Highway 97
- J: Dawson Creek - Prince George
- K: Prince George - Fort St James
- L1: Prince Rupert - Prince George
- L2: Prince George - Alberta Border & Highway 16
- S2: University Endowment Lands (UBC) - Whistler
- T: Victoria - Nanaimo
- Y: Victoria - Vancouver

On all other routes, as listed below, reduce minimum route frequency to two trips weekly in each direction and eliminate some route points:

- A: Alberta Border - Vancouver
- B1: Kamloops - Kelowna
- B2: Kelowna - Penticton
- C: Vancouver - Osoyoos
- D: Kelowna - Alberta Border & Highway 3
- E: Prince George - Vancouver
- G: Alberta Border & Highway 2 - Dawson Creek
- N: Alberta Border & Highway 16 - Vancouver
- P: Kelowna - Vancouver
- S1: Vancouver - Pemberton / Mt. Currie

Route L1: Prince Rupert – Prince George

Greyhound applied to eliminate its inter-city bus service on route L1 between Prince Rupert and Prince George. The Greyhound licence sets minimum route frequency (MRF) requirements of 14 trips per week for Route L1 and each route point. The route is shown in the map below.

Map of Route L1



Individual route points are listed in the table below.

Route L1 Points (at the time of application)

Prince Rupert	Skeena Cross ^{fd}	Broman Lake ^{fd}
Port Edward Corner ^{fd}	New Hazelton	Burns Lake
Tyee ^{fd}	Moricetown ^{fd}	Fraser Lake
Kwinitsa ^{fd}	Smithers	Fort Fraser
Shames ^{fd}	Telkwa	Vanderhoof
Terrace	Houston	Prince George
Kitwanga Junction	Topley	

^{fd} represents “flag” or “drop” stops where Greyhound is only required to pick up or drop off passengers upon them signalling the bus.

Greyhound Information

Average passenger load on this route dropped from 11.9 to 10 between fiscal years 2013 and 2017. Total passenger counts in the same period dropped from 41,107 to 23,378, or by 43%. Passenger revenue per mile (PRM) declined from \$2.93 in fiscal year ending 2013 to \$2.42 in 2017. Breakeven PRM for Greyhound in B.C. is \$7.09.

Government/Agencies

We received submissions from the Member of Parliament for Cariboo – Prince George, the Mayors of Prince Rupert, Prince George, Terrace, New Hazelton, Vanderhoof, Hazelton and Granisle, the Chairs of the Regional Districts of Fraser-Fort George, North Coast, Kitimat-Stikine and Bulkley-Nechako, and the political executive of the First Nations Summit. The B.C. Civil Liberties Association, Carrier Sekani Family Services, Vancouver Council of Women, and Ending Violence Association of B.C. also provided letters. These organizations are all opposed to the elimination of Greyhound's inter-city bus service on Highway 16 between Prince Rupert and Prince George.

Public hearings along this route were held in Prince George, Smithers and Terrace. Presenters in Prince George include: Mayors of Prince George and Vanderhoof and the Chair of the Fraser-Fort George Regional District.

Presenters at the Terrace hearing include: Mayor of Terrace, Deputy Director for the District of Kitimat, Constituency Assistant for the Member of Parliament for Skeena Bulkley Valley, Economic Development Officer for Regional District of Kitimat- Stikine and Executive Director of Kermode Friendship Society.

Presenters at the Smithers hearing include: Mayor of Smithers, Director Kitimat-Stikine Regional District, Director of Bulkley Nechako Regional District, Constituency Assistant for the Member of Parliament for Skeena Bulkley Valley, Constituency Assistant for the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Stikine and Smithers District Chamber of Commerce.

The Mayor of Prince George presented the UBCM resolution calling for the Board to decline Greyhound's application and requesting the province to strengthen transportation infrastructure. This resolution was approved unanimously by local governments at the UBCM convention in September 2017.

A number of local government representatives referenced a fall meeting in Prince George with Greyhound. Issues raised at this meeting were:

- Scheduling hours of Greyhound buses: these are based on the company's freight operations not passenger convenience and safety; and
- The significance of Greyhound service to remote communities on and near Highway 16.

The North Central Region of B.C. accounts for approximately 70% of B.C.'s landmass. Communities are isolated and population is sparse. Local government representatives and



agencies note that elimination of inter-city bus service on northern routes will have serious impacts on the lives of northern residents. Greyhound cuts will further isolate communities, and increase safety risks associated with travel in the North Central Region. Only Prince George has a population with over 20,000 people. Prince George is the hub for commerce, health care, education and other services. Prince George is also relatively isolated, with a seven-hour commute to another city with a population of its size.

For people with low incomes, Indigenous people, seniors, persons with disabilities, youth and others, Greyhound can be their only means of transportation. There are many people in the region who do not have a car.

There are few transportation options in the region. In the harsh winter months, Greyhound service is essential to people, including seniors who may be reluctant to drive in winter conditions. This route is along Highway 16, "the Highway of Tears", known for the many women and girls who have gone missing or been murdered. Elimination of service will likely lead to increased dangerous behavior such as hitchhiking and could result in more deaths.

Greyhound's service is essential to the North Central region's residents living, working and education decisions. It enables visits with friends and family, and people to take holidays. It is important for medical and personal appointments. Loss of Greyhound services will impact on many people's quality of life.

Greyhound's service allows businesses to recruit, transport and retain employees. For the North Central Region to thrive, develop its resources and attract population, inter-city service is required. Without it, isolation will worsen.

Commentators noted there is a need to develop partnerships between the province, local governments and others to provide long haul bus services. Subsidies will likely be required. While local governments want to participate in this, they only have one source of revenue, property taxes. There is concern about provincial government off-loading. Southern B.C. transportation is heavily subsidized with B.C. Transit and B.C. Ferries. The North Central Region should be treated equitably by the provincial government.

Suggestions for making the company more profitable include: using smaller buses on the route, more convenient schedules or more frequent service. Regulatory reform may be a way to increase Greyhound's competitiveness. It was suggested that if Greyhound is permitted to use rural and northern B.C. highways for freight, it should be compelled to provide passenger service.

The B.C. Transit bus service on Highway 16 is a short haul service connecting communities. It was established to complement Greyhound's service. It does not service Prince Rupert. Cancellation of Greyhound service will render moot Prince Rupert's solution to addressing the Highway of Tears issue by subsidizing travel for at-risk residents.

The bus service offered by Northern Health is not an option for most people. The service is limited to persons with medical appointments and it runs infrequently. Air transport is not a realistic option as it does not exist in all communities and is expensive.

A transportation plan is needed for the north.

Individuals

Seventeen letters or emails were received from individuals concerning the elimination of route L1. Two businesses sent in comments. Two individuals made presentations at the hearing in Terrace.

Inter-city bus service is essential to small, isolated rural communities. It provides access to larger hub cities like Prince George for medical and personal appointments, for shopping and services not provided in smaller communities. It is used for visiting family and friends, access to education and work opportunities not found in smaller communities and for holiday travel. The service allows children in care to have contact with their families. Greyhound services are especially important to vulnerable people, persons with disabilities, Indigenous people, people with low incomes, students and seniors.

Greyhound provides a safe service. The tragedy of the Highway of Tears and missing and murdered women and girls was brought up by a number of individuals. Without bus service, more people will hitchhike, and potentially more women and girls could be murdered. Greyhound also provides safe winter transportation on treacherous northern roads. The importance of the bus service during the 2017 wildfires was also noted.

Two businesses note Greyhound's importance for moving freight at a reasonable cost. The local economy is poised for development and Greyhound's cutbacks would unfairly hamper economic development and cause hardship for the people who can least afford it.

A number of the commentators felt Greyhound brought about its current situation. More frequent, convenient services, shorter travel time, better terminal facilities and better prices were suggested as ways of improving ridership. It was also suggested that buses be modified to accommodate more freight and short buses be used.

The lack of transportation options was noted. Northern Health bus service is not a substitute as it can only be used for medical appointments. The B.C. Transit bus is a short

haul bus that cannot be compared to Greyhound and does not provide service to all the communities that Greyhound does. Via Rail is unreliable and expensive.

Greyhound was asked how many jobs will be lost if the application is approved. It was also asked if there was subsidized inter-city bus service elsewhere in Canada.

Applicant Response

Greyhound's response to the comments from governments, agencies, individuals and businesses focused on the low ridership on this route, with an average passenger load of 10 people. Greyhound states they need an average of 30 to 35 passengers to breakeven on the route. PRM is only \$2.42 and Greyhound's breakeven PRM is \$7.09. Greyhound incurs financial losses on each trip on this route.

With the low ridership and high losses on this route, Greyhound cannot operate without a subsidy. It has requested government assistance but without success. It cannot compete with \$5 B.C. Transit fares. Greyhound is a for-profit business and does not have a social mandate. It must compete with Via Rail, the Northern Health bus and B.C. Transit, all of which are heavily subsidized.

Greyhound has discussed the need for subsidies with the provincial government for many years. A Connecting Communities Fund was proposed by Greyhound to provide funding to municipalities and First Nations to publicly tender inter-city transit operations. If local governments and the province work toward a new service option, private sector carriers should be asked to participate. The provincial government funds urban transportation and rural and small communities should have transportation too.

Greyhound will continue with its freight operations. Greyhound states it wants to move freight at a lower cost, so it will not use buses but will use vans or trucks for freight. In the north, demand for freight movement is greater than for passenger movement. The revenue from freight also exceeds revenue from passengers.

Short buses are not an option as they only have 23% of the useful life of standard buses. They are also not suitable for harsh winter weather conditions.

Options for transportation cited by the company include the Northern Health bus for medical appointments, B.C. Transit service along Highway 16, Via Rail and air travel.

The number of employees that could lose their jobs as a result of the proposed change is 35 to 40 people. Greyhound notes that only in Quebec are inter-city bus services subsidized.

Board Analysis & Finding

The elimination of this route between Prince George and Prince Rupert is a safety issue. Public safety concerns are significant along the Highway of Tears and concerns about the elimination of bus service along this corridor were expressed by residents from across the province. Greyhound provides access to essential services and to services that can affect quality of life of those who use this route. Transportation options for people from the North Central Region are restricted to travel assistance for medical appointments, air services and rail. The latter two are expensive. A short haul B.C. Transit bus service between Prince George and Terrace is also available. These are not, however, viable transportation alternatives to Greyhound's long haul service for many of the users of this route.

The Board has no jurisdiction over Greyhound's freight operations or highways.

Greyhound is a private, for-profit company which does not receive public subsidies. On this route, the current average passenger load of 10 people per trip is very low. Greyhound states 30 to 35 passengers are needed for it to breakeven on the route. Ridership has declined by over 40% in the past five years. Greyhound incurs financial losses on each trip on this route.

The Board's role is to consider whether ridership demonstrates sufficient public need for the service and whether approving the application would promote sound economic conditions in the transportation industry in B.C.

Public use of the service is very low. Greyhound's business strategy is to eliminate routes that lose significant money and make changes to its minimum route frequency and route points on other routes in order to improve its overall profitability. We received financial information for Greyhound. It demonstrates that Greyhound cannot cross subsidize this route from profits made on other routes. Continued losses cannot be sustained.

Route L1: Decision

For the reasons set out above and in accordance with Decision 4 in Section VI, we approve the elimination of Route L1 as of June 1, 2018. From the date of this decision until May 31, 2018, Greyhound may decrease its minimum route frequency (MRF) to 4 times per week (2 times in each direction). Greyhound must meet notice requirements set out in Section VII before any schedule changes may be implemented.