

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO

REGIONAL TRANSIT COMMITTEE MEETING
(Committee Of The Whole)

Thursday, February 22, 2018

PRESENT: Chair Taylor Bachrach

Directors Chris Beach
Eileen Benedict
Shane Brienen
Mark Fisher
Tom Greenaway
Dwayne Lindstrom
Rob MacDougall
Bill Miller
Rob Newell
Mark Parker
Jerry Petersen
Darcy Repen
Gerry Thiessen

Director Thomas Liversidge, Village of Granisle
Absent

Staff Melany de Weerd, Chief Administrative Officer
John Illes, Chief Financial Officer
Deneve Vanderwolf, Regional Transit Coordinator
Wendy Wainwright, Executive Assistant

Via Tele-Conference Lara Beckett, Director Electoral Area "C" Chilako River-Nechako, Regional District of Fraser-Fort George
Deborah Bowman, Assistant Deputy Minister, Transportation Policy and Programs, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure
Zoe Dhillon, Special Projects Coordinator, District of Vanderhoof
Chris Fudge, Senior Regional Transit Manager, BC Transit
Linda Harmon, Transit Crown Agency Programs, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure
Debbie Joujan, Chief Administrative Officer, Village of Telkwa
Jim Martin, CAO, Regional District of Fraser-Fort George
Adrianna McMullen, Transportation Planner, Business Development Planning, BC Transit
Tiina Schaeffer, Manager of Sustainable Community Development and Transit, City of Prince George

Other Hazel Burt, Councillor, Cheslatta Carrier Nation – left at 1:55 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Bachrach called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m.

AGENDA & SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

Moved by Director Miller
Seconded by Director Petersen

RTC. 2018-1-1

"That the Regional Transit Committee Agenda for February 22, 2018 be adopted; and further, that the Supplementary Agenda be dealt with at this meeting."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

MINUTES

Regional Transit Committee Meeting Minutes -October 12, 2017

Moved by Director MacDougall
Seconded by Director Beach

RTC.2018-1-2

“That the Minutes of the Regional Transit Committee meeting of October 12, 2017 be received.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

REPORTS

2018 Regional Transit Committee Meeting Schedule

Moved by Director Repen
Seconded by Director Newell

RTC.2018-1-3

1. “That the Regional Transit Committee receive the Regional Transit Coordinator’s memo dated January 29, 2018 titled “2018 Regional Transit Committee Meeting Schedule.”
2. That the Regional Transit committee recommend that the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Board of Directors approve the 2018 Regional Transit Committee Meeting Schedule.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

2017 Rider Survey Report

Moved by Director Repen
Seconded by Director Beach

RTC.2018-1-4

“That the Regional Transit Committee receive the Regional Transit Coordinator’s January 25, 2018 memo titled “2017 Rider Survey Report.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Director MacDougall mentioned that with the Passenger Transportation Board’s decision to allow Greyhound Canada to withdraw passenger bus service from the region he will be reaching out to Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and BC Transit in regard to finding a possible solution to connect Fort St. James to the Highway 16 Transit System.

2017 Ridership Table

Moved by Director MacDougall
Seconded by Director Parker

RTC.2018-1-5

“That the Regional Transit Committee receive the Regional Transit Coordinator’s January 25, 2018 memo titled “2017 Ridership Table.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Director Repen commented that the service between Houston and Smithers is demonstrating use between the two hubs and perhaps in the future there may be an opportunity to review future expansion of the route.

REPORTS (CONT'D)

Information Signage Infrastructure

Moved by Director Miller
Seconded by Director Repen

RTC.2018-1-6

“That the Regional Transit Committee receive the Regional Transit Coordinator’s February 6, 2018 memo titled “Information Signage Infrastructure.”

(All/Directors/Majority) **CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

Chair Bachrach spoke of the challenges of overlapping routes and designing signage that best identifies the different routes. He mentioned the Telkwa/Smithers route and the Smithers/Morricetown route as examples. They are two different buses with two different fares but both travel Highway 16.

Chris Fudge, Senior Regional Transit Manager, BC Transit reiterated that there are challenges and BC Transit is working on communications and information sharing on an ongoing basis in order to find a balance in its messaging and the best solution to provide information to riders.

Discussion took place in regard to the possibility of having multiple schedules at bus stops. Mr. Fudge indicated that in some circumstances where space allows that is a possibility.

The possible branding or advertising on the BC Transit buses was discussed. Mr. Fudge mentioned that BC Transit is a provincial corporate brand and advertising options are limited, as the transit bus needs to be recognized as a BC Transit Bus.

CORRESPONDENCE

BC Transit – Draft Highway 16 Bus Stop Analysis Updates

Moved by Director Beach
Seconded by Director Fisher

RTC.2018-1-7

“That the Regional Transit Committee receive the correspondence from BC Transit – Draft Highway 16 Bus Stop Analysis Updates.”

(All/Directors/Majority) **CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

Director Fisher spoke of prioritizing the utilization of the existing stop location in Electoral Area “A” (Smithers Rural) for Route 162 Smithers to Burns Lake. Adrianna McMullen, Transportation Planner, Business Development Planning, BC Transit indicated that the stop could be a request stop and if ridership increased consideration could be given to implementing the stop as a permanent stop location for Route 162.

Mr. Fudge commented that the BC Transit document Draft Highway 16 Bus Stop Analysis Updates was conducted to review potential new proposed stops. In implementing the Highway 16 Transit System, BC Transit and Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure anticipated that there would be a need to review stop locations and possibly add new location and make changes to existing locations. Safety was one of the key considerations in the bus stop analysis.

CORRESPONDENCE (CONT'D)

Discussion took place in regard to stop locations identified as Area "G" (Houston Rural) in Table 1. Director Newell mentioned there are currently no stops located in Area G. Ms. McMullen identified that there are Medium Term Bus Stops Proposed in Table 2 of the document for Area "G".

News-Release – Northern Residents Benefiting from Safer, More Affordable Travel on Highway 16

Moved by Director Beach
Seconded by Director Newell

RTC.2018-1-8

"That the Regional Transit Committee receive the News Release from the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure - Northern Residents Benefiting from Safer, More Affordable Travel on Highway 16."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Chair Bachrach commented that there have been a number of positive comments in regard to the implementation of the Highway 16 Transit System and thanked the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and BC Transit for their work in moving forward the Highway 16 Transit System. Deborah Bowman, Assistant Deputy Minister, Transportation Policy and Programs, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure recognized BC Transit and all stakeholders for their work and spoke of the importance of recognizing the one-year milestone of the transit work that has occurred along Highway 16.

BC Transit – Transit Shelter Program

Moved by Director MacDougall
Seconded by Director Repen

RTC.2018-1-9

"That the Regional Transit Committee receive the correspondence from BC Transit – Transit Shelter Program."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure – Transit Minor Betterments Program -Application Guide-Program Criteria

Moved by Director Miller
Seconded by Director Repen

RTC.2018-1-10

"That the Regional Transit Committee receive the correspondence from the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure – Transit Minor Betterments Program – Application Guide – Program Criteria."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

CORRESPONDENCE (CONT'D)

Town of Smithers – Minutes of the Smithers and District Transit Committee -December 1, 2017 Moved by Director Beach
Seconded by Director Newell

RTC.2018-1-11

“That the Regional Transit Committee receive the correspondence from the Town of Smithers – Minutes of the Smithers and District Transit Committee – December 1, 2017.”

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Director Newell brought forward the possibility of implementing a commuter system between Houston and Smithers and the economic benefit this would provide to the area.

Director Repen spoke of the challenges of communicating the new schedule for the Smithers to Telkwa Route and appreciates the effort to partner and promote the new schedule between the Village of Telkwa, Town of Smithers, Electoral Area “A” (Smithers Rural) and Witset First Nation (Morisetown Band).

Director Fisher has sent an e-mail to Via Rail in regard to an article from the Toronto Star: “*Via Rail may offer \$5 fares for ‘Highway of Tears’ route*” he presented at the Smithers and District Transit Committee Meeting Friday, December 1, 2017. He has not yet had a response.

Town of Spallumcheen-Letter of Support for the Adoption of a Flexible Ride-Sharing Regulation in the Province of B.C. Moved by Director Miller
Seconded by Director Brienen

RTC.2018-1-12

“That the Regional Transit Committee receive the correspondence from the Town of Spallumcheen – Letter of Support for the Adoption of a Flexible Ride-Sharing Regulation in the Province of B.C.”

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

REPORTS

January 2018 Ridership Table Moved by Director MacDougall
Seconded by Director Beach

RTC.2018-1-13

“That the Regional Transit Committee receive the Regional Transit Coordinator’s February 20, 2018 memo titled “January 2018 Ridership Table.”

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA (CONT'D)

REPORT (CONT'D)

Passenger Transportation Board – Greyhound Decision

Discussion took place in regard to the Honourable Claire Trevena, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure contacting a number of RDBN member Municipal Mayors in regard to the Passenger Transportation Board Greyhound Canada Application Decision. Chair Bachrach noted that Minister Trevena indicated that she wants to work with communities to find solutions to mitigate the impact of Greyhound Canada withdrawing passenger service in the region. Chair Bachrach mentioned that a Town of Smithers Councillor is currently at UBCM and has spoken with Minister Trevena and she indicated her concerns in regard to the gap in transit service with the decision from the Passenger Transportation Board.

Director MacDougall, in speaking with Minister Trevena, noted that it would be beneficial for the Highway 16 Transit System to receive long term funding to potentially mitigate the issues that may be experienced with the withdrawal of passenger services from Greyhound Canada. It would also be beneficial if in the near future, the system could be expanded to off highway communities such as Fort St. James, Granisle and First Nations communities.

Discussion took place in regard to the specific requests of the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure from each of the communities in the region. Director Thiessen suggested that municipal councils determine the needs of their communities and bring forward the information to provide a unified Transit Committee voice. Director Thiessen voiced concerns in regard to people not having access to transportation in order to travel to the region with the withdrawal of services.

Director Miller brought forward concerns regarding the lack of a long journey provision and the potential impact of freight delivery to the business community.

Ms. Bowman spoke to the following:

- Minister Trevena is fully committed to looking for solutions
- Wednesday, February 21, 2018 Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure Media Release spoke to the Minister wanting to work closely with communities to find solutions
- MoTI is working very hard to explore opportunities
 - There may be an opportunity for the private sector to potentially provide a service
 - There may be smaller companies that can be nimble and innovative that can make an opportunity work to provide long-haul, inter-city bus service
 - Won't wait for the private sector to step in but there is potential for them to do so
- Communities will receive communication from either Ms. Bowman's office or Minister Trevena's office in regard to consultation and next steps
- There is a 90 day time frame prior to the full withdrawal of passenger transportation services
- Greyhound Canada has indicated freight delivery will continue
- Communities speaking with one voice is important
 - Encouraged communities to make decisions relatively quickly in regard to the wants in the region
 - Need to understand from a broader community perspective what the government needs to be aware of
 - Important for the MoTI and Minister Trevena to hear those thoughts
- Need to work together across jurisdictions and political parties
- Met with John Rustad, MLA Nechako Lakes, Ellis Ross, MLA Skeena and Shirley Bond, MLA Prince George-Valemount in regard to the issue
- Minister Trevena is committed to work on finding a solution and MOTI will be connecting with communities in the very near future

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA (CONT'D)

REPORT (CONT'D)

- Via Rail
 - Received a call from Via Rail
 - MOTI will be engaging with Via Rail to investigate options for Via Rail service and assistance
 - MOTI spent time with Via Rail in 2017 to evaluate the service
 - Dependability and safety of passengers is a consideration
- Ride-Share
 - All Party Parliamentary Committee – representatives from government and both opposition parties tabled a committee report February 14, 2018 under Crown Corporation in regard to Ride-Share
 - A number of recommendations to government
 - In the process of working with an expert from Ottawa in regard to the revitalization of taxi service in B.C.

Director Repen brought forward concerns in regard to Via Rail scheduling being impacted by CN Railway. He spoke of examples of transit systems in northern Scandinavia countries where service is provided through public partnerships that contract to private contractors to provide transit service systems.

Director Miller expressed frustrations that approximately 50% of the population of the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako resides outside municipal boundaries and Minister Trevena did not contact the Regional District concerning the Passenger Transportation Board Greyhound Canada application decision. He spoke of the importance of reaching out to Regional Districts.

Chair Bachrach spoke to Minister Trevena's plans in regard to consultation. Ms. Bowman noted that currently there is not a formal plan in place and she will bring comments forward to Minister Trevena. Ms. Bowman mentioned that MOTI is in the process of determining the next steps moving forward and has access to the transcripts of the Passenger Transportation Board's Public Hearings and the letters received in regard to the issue.

Lara Beckett, Director Electoral Area "C" Chilako River-Nechako, Regional District of Fraser-Fort George commented that she is a member of the North Central Local Government Association (NCLGA) Board of Directors and that there may be an opportunity to bring forward a late resolution to NCLGA in regard to transit. Chair Bachrach spoke of having discussions as a Regional Board to potentially provide a resolution to NCLGA.

Ms. Bowman noted that Greyhound Canada would withdraw service in 90 days, which occurs on May 31, 2018. Greyhound Canada passenger transportation will no longer be in effect as of June 1, 2018. Ms. Bowman commented that this does not allow a lot of time in moving forward and it is a priority of the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. The Passenger Transportation Board has also indicated it would expediently review any applications received from the private sector in regard to long-haul intercommunity service through the region.

CORRESPONDENCE

Passenger Transportation
Board – Greyhound Decision

Moved by Director Beach
Seconded by Director Newell

RTC.2018-1-14

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

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Director Newell
Seconded by Director Beach

RTC.2018-1-15

“That the meeting be adjourned at 2:05 p.m.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Taylor Bachrach, Chair

Wendy Wainwright, Executive Assistant