



REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO
RURAL/AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
AGENDA
Thursday, June 8, 2023

PAGE NO.

ACTION

AGENDA, June 8, 2023

Approve

Supplementary Agenda

Receive

MINUTES

xx

Rural/Agriculture Committee Meeting Minutes
- April 6, 2023

Approve

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

ACTION

Land Referral

xx-xx

Rowan Nagel, GIS/Planning Technician
Crown Land Application Referral No. 7410293
Electoral Area F (Vanderhoof Rural)

Recommendation

REGIONAL TRANSIT

xx

Jason Llewellyn, Director of Planning
Electoral Area Participation in the Transit Service

Recommendation

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

NEW BUSINESS

IN-CAMERA MOTION

That this meeting be closed to the public pursuant to Section 90(2)(b) of the *Community Charter* for the Board to deal with matters relating to the following:

- Legacy Funding

ADJOURNMENT

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO

RURAL/AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, April 6, 2023

PRESENT: Chair Clint Lambert

Directors Judy Greenaway
Shirley Moon
Chris Newell – via Zoom
Mark Parker
Michael Riis-Christianson
Stoney Stoltenberg

Staff Curtis Helgesen, Chief Administrative Officer
Cheryl Anderson, Director of Corporate Services
Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development
John Illes, Chief Financial Officer
Danielle Patterson, Senior Planner – left at 11:32 a.m.
Wendy Wainwright, Deputy Director of Corporate Services

Others Martin Elphee, District of Fort St. James
Linda McGuire, Village of Granisle – via Zoom
Kevin Moutray, District of Vanderhoof
Charlie Rensby, Village of Burns Lake
Frank Wray, Town of Smithers

CALL TO ORDER Chair Lambert called the meeting to order at 11:22 p.m.

AGENDA Moved by Director Greenaway
Seconded by Director Stoltenberg

RDC.2023-3-1 “That the Rural/Agriculture Committee Agenda for April 6, 2023 be approved.”

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

MINUTES

Rural/Agriculture Committee Meeting Minutes -March 9, 2023 Moved by Director Riis-Christianson
Seconded by Director Stoltenberg

RDC.2023-3-2 “That the minutes of the Rural/Agriculture Committee meeting of March 9, 2023 be approved.”

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

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Land Referral

Crown Land Application
Referral No. 7410295
Electoral Area F (Vanderhoof
Rural)

Moved by Director Stoltenberg
Seconded by Director Parker

RDC.2023-3-3

"That the comment sheet be amended to clarify the applicant's intent regarding burning timber or other materials and consideration for dust mitigation measures; and further, that the comment sheet as amended be provided to the Province as the Regional District's comments on Crown Land Application No. 7410295."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Discussion took place regarding:

- Clarifying
 - o Burning of timber
 - o Traffic and road dust mitigation measures
- First Nations consultation
- Agricultural Land Commission Process
- Temporary Use Permit Process.

RURAL REPORT

Rural Bursary Policy
Discussion

Moved by Director Riis-Christianson
Seconded by Director Stoltenberg

RDC.2023-3-4

"That the Committee receive the Manager of Regional Economic Development's Rural Bursary Policy Discussion memorandum."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

The following was discussed:

- Targeting areas where there is recruitment and retention challenges
- Utilizing the school's Scholarship/Bursary Committees to distribute the scholarship/bursary to graduating students
- Taxing rural government
 - o Individual Electoral Areas continue with Grant in Aid
 - o All rural areas – rural government
 - o Government to government transfer
 - o Grant in lieu of taxes for Electoral Areas D and E
- Areas A and G having two Secondary Schools
- Continuing the current practice of grant in aid.
- Drafting a policy to bring back for Board consideration.

RURAL REPORT (CONT'D)

Rural Bursary Policy
Discussion

Moved by Director Riis-Christianson
Seconded by Director Moon

RDC.2023-3-5

"That the Committee recommend that the Board direct staff to draft a Rural Bursary Policy and budget options to be brought forward for the Committee's consideration."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

NEW BUSINESS

BC Rural Centre's "Keeping it Rural" Conference in Kelowna - June 1-2, 2023

Director Moon brought forward attending the BC Rural Centre's "Keeping it Rural" Conference in Kelowna on June 1-2, 2023.

Virtual UBCM Old Growth Local Government Session April 13, 2023

Director Greenaway brought forward attending and registration for the virtual UBCM Old Growth Local Government Session on April 13, 2023.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Director Stoltenberg
Seconded by Director Parker

RDC.2023-3-6

"That the meeting be adjourned at 11:51 p.m."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Clint Lambert, Chair

Wendy Wainwright, Deputy Director of
Corporate Services



Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Rural/Agriculture Committee

To: Chair and Committee
From: Rowan Nagel, GIS/Planning Technician
Date: June 8, 2023
Subject: Crown Land Application Referral No. 7410293

RECOMMENDATION: (all/directors/majority)

That the attached comment sheet be provided to the Province as the Regional District's comments on Crown Land Application No. 7410293.

BACKGROUND

This application is for a Notation of Interest under the Trapline policy to construct a cabin on crown land for users of trapline #TRO712T003.

The area of interest is a 50 m by 50 m section of Crown Land near Lumpy Lake, approximately 60 kilometres south-east of the District of Vanderhoof, in Electoral Area F. The location is remote, without zoning or building inspection services. Site access is via an unmaintained resource road. The nearest provincial highway is Blackwater Road.

The applicant plans to construct a 35.7 m² (384 ft²) cabin, a 1.4 m² (15 ft²) outhouse, and a 17.8 m² (192 ft²) woodshed. The application states that operations may include the removal of merchantable timber, however satellite imagery shows the land was formerly a cut block, so disturbance to mature vegetation is expected to be minimal.



ATTACHMENT:

Comment Sheet



**REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO
COMMENT SHEET ON LAND REFERRAL 7410293**

Electoral Area:	Area F
Applicant:	Unknown
Existing Land Use:	N/A
Zoning:	N/A
Plan Designation	N/A
Proposed Use Comply with Zoning:	N/A
If not, why?	N/A
Agricultural Land Reserve:	No
Access:	Unsigned Resource Road, Blackwater Road
Building Inspection:	No
Fire Protection:	No
Other comments:	None



Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Rural/Agriculture Committee

To: Chair and Committee
From: Jason Llewellyn, Director of Planning
Date: June 8, 2023
Subject: Electoral Area Participation in the Transit Service

RECOMMENDATION:

That each Rural Director identify whether they are supportive, at this time, of their Electoral Area being included in the service area pursuant to "Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Regional Public Transit and Para-Transit (Highway 16) Service Establishment Bylaw No. 1790, 2016."

DISCUSSION

At the May 18, 2023, Board meeting the Board received the attached staff report and passed the following motion:

That the Board direct staff to initiate the process to amend "Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Regional Public Transit and Para-Transit (Highway 16) Service Establishment Bylaw No. 1790, 2016" to increase the requisition limit to \$200,000 and include interested Electoral Areas as identified at the June 8, 2023 Rural / Agricultural Committee Meeting.

As directed in the above motion this report is asking that each Rural Director identify whether they are supportive, at this time, of their Electoral Area being included in the service area pursuant to an amended "Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Regional Public Transit and Para-Transit (Highway 16) Service Establishment Bylaw No. 1790, 2016."

It is important that Directors provide direction at this time to allow the amendment bylaws to be drafted and considered in accordance with the following timeline.

Step 1 - Confirmation of Bylaw amendment (May 18, 2023)

Step 2 - Rural / Agriculture Committee regarding Electoral Area participation (June 8, 2023)

Step 3 - Board 1st, 2nd, 3rd readings of Bylaw 1790 amendment bylaw (June, 22, 2023)

Step 4 - Municipal Council's authorization of Bylaw 1790 amendment bylaw (August 2023)

Step 5 - Submission of Bylaw 1790 amendment bylaw to Province (September, 2023)

Step 6 - Provincial approval of Bylaw 1790 amendments 60 day estimate (November, 2023)

Step 7 - Board adoption of Bylaw 1790 amendment bylaw (December, 2023)

It is understood that consideration of adoption of the amendment bylaws is to occur following discussions with BC Transit and the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure regarding long term funding for the service.

ATTACHMENTS

May 18, 2023 Board Report, Transit Bylaw Amendment



Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Board of Directors

To: Chair and Board
From: Jason Llewellyn, Director of Planning
Date: May 18, 2023
Subject: Transit Service Bylaw Amendment

RECOMMENDATION:

(all/directors/majority)

That the Board direct staff to initiate the process to amend "Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Regional Public Transit and Para-Transit (Highway 16) Service Establishment Bylaw No. 1790, 2016" to increase the requisition limit to \$200,000 and include interested Electoral Areas as identified at the June 8, 2023 Rural / Agricultural Committee Meeting.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bulkley Nechako Transit Service (BNTS) started operations in June of 2017 to provide transit service along the Highway 16 corridor from Burns Lake to Smithers and Burns Lake to Prince George. The BNTS service participants are the RDBN's member municipalities.

In 2024 the RDBN's operational costs for the service are predicted to exceed the maximum requisition amount of \$90,000 established in Service Establishment Bylaw No. 1790. Therefore, staff are recommending that the bylaw be amended to increase the maximum taxation requisition to \$200,000. Staff also recommend that the bylaw be amended to include all Electoral Areas as the BNTS best functions as a regional service and ridership by rural residents appears to be equal to that of municipal residents.

OVERVIEW OF TRANSIT SYSTEM OPERATIONS

The BNTS started operations in June of 2017. A component of the Province's Highway 16 Action Plan, the service was established by the RDBN at the Province's request, to address the lack of public transportation along Highway 16 and to reduce hitchhiking along the Highway 16 corridor. Since its establishment, the BNTS has seen consistent ridership and has proven itself to be a valuable service to the region.

The service includes two routes that are based out of Burns Lake. Route 161 travels on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday making a round trip to Prince George. Route 162 travels on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday making a round trip to Smithers, with an additional midday run to Houston and back to Smithers before returning to Burns Lake. The cost of a one-way ride is \$5 and there is an option for riders to purchase a sheet of 10 tickets for \$45.

Bus Stop Locations	Bus Stop Numbers
Vanderhoof	4 locations / 1 shelter
Fraser Lake	3 locations / 1 shelter
Burns Lake	9 locations / 2 shelters
Houston	10 locations / 2 shelter
Telkwa	2 locations / 1 shelter
Smithers	6 locations / 2 shelters
Electoral Area A	Laidlaw Road / shelter Quick Road West / sign
Electoral Area B	Duncan Lake Rd. / sign Decker Lake / sign Tintagel rest stop / sign Palling Reserve / shelter
Electoral Area D	Endako Pub /sign Fort Fraser / sign Nautley Reserve / sign Stellaquo Reserve / shelter
Electoral Area F	Cluculz Lake rest stop / sign
Electoral Area G	Topley / shelter

Service Establishment Bylaw No. 1790, 2016

["Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Regional Public Transit and Para-Transit \(Highway 16\) Service Establishment Bylaw No. 1790, 2016"](#) was established for the purpose of providing the transit service along the Highway 16 corridor. Electoral Areas are not part of the service and do not contribute taxation to the operation of the service. However, grant in aid support from Electoral Areas has been provided in past years.

The Bylaw authorizes a maximum annual requisition of \$90,000 for the cost of the service. The cost is apportioned between municipalities based on their population with a benefit

factor for on-corridor participants of 5 and for off-corridor participants of 1. This means that off-corridor residents (Fort St. James and Granisle) are taxed at 1/5 the rate of residents along Hwy. 16.

Transit Service Agreement and Annual Operating Agreement

The service is a partnership between the RDBN and BC Transit. The terms of the partnership are outlined in the [Transit Service Agreement \(TSA\)](#) entered into in 2017, and Annual Operating Agreements (AOAs) entered into annually.

The TSA outlines the respective RDBN and BC Transit responsibilities as follows:

- The RDBN is responsible for reviewing and approving service and performance standards based on operating and capital budgets set by BC Transit, establishing and collecting the fares and other revenues, and recommending the annual operating budget for BC Transit approval.
- BC Transit is responsible for setting the annual budget, leasing transit vehicles to the transit service operator, managing the contract with the transit service operator, marketing, and conducting service audits and recommending standards of service to the RDBN.

The TSA and AOA do not contain any agreement regarding the cost sharing formula between the RDBN and BC Transit. The agreement is by [letter from the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure \(MoTI\)](#). The Ministry has agreed to maintain their funding of 66.7% of costs for the BNTS until March 31, 2025 for operational costs only. A conventional transit system is funded by BC Transit at 46.69%. There is no agreement for cost sharing for future capital costs.

Bus Stops and Transit Shelters

When the transit service was established in 2017 MoTI entered into written agreements with municipalities and First Nations (Vanderhoof, Fraser Lake, Burns Lake, Houston, and Wet'suwet'en First Nation) that MoTI would build the Bus Stops and Transit Shelters and that the municipality and First Nation would be responsible for maintenance and any associated liability for the shelters.

MoTI built the bus stops and transit shelters in the rural area. The RDBN has not agreed to be responsible for replacement or maintenance of any of the infrastructure in the rural area as it is outside of the service area. However, BC Transit staff have indicated a desire for the RDBN to take responsibility for the infrastructure in the rural area. This is an area for

future negotiation under the AOA process as the RDBN and BC Transit must agree on any new bus stop or transit shelter related costs. Snow clearing around bus stops in the rural area is undertaken by MoTI contractors, and the Town of Smithers empties the garbage at the Laidlaw Road bus stop.

Requests for all new bus shelters or bus stops in the rural area, in municipalities and on First Nations reserves must be made by the RDBN according to Provincial policy, and only the RDBN can access grant funding annually for 80% of new shelters through BC Transit's Shelter Program. Under the grant program 20% of shelter construction and installation costs and cost overruns is the responsibility of the RDBN unless a different funding arrangement is negotiated in the AOA. This includes new infrastructure on reserve.

Inclusion of Electoral Areas within the service establishment bylaw would allow the RDBN to formalize the RDBN's role regarding transit infrastructure in the rural area and allow for improved rural infrastructure.

Bus Replacement

In a conventional system lease fees are a cost share between the local government partner and BC Transit. The total monthly lease cost for each of the light duty buses that are in service for the BNTS would be \$3,092. This is the standard lease fee rate charged for all light duty buses, then depending on the funding agreement with BC Transit, the Local Government would pay their share. If the BNTS was a conventionally funded system this would translate to an annual cost to the RDBN of \$24,488 per bus and if lease payments were funded under the current funding formula the annual cost to the RDBN would be \$12,244 per bus.

When the transit service was established in 2017 BC Transit supplied the 3 buses required to operate the service. The buses have a 30 passenger capacity and are equipped with wheelchair lifts. These buses are scheduled for replacement in 2023. Staff have received a verbal indication from BC Transit that the busses will be replaced in 2023 with Provincial and Federal funding, however, this has not been confirmed in writing.

Ridership

The following table provides 2022 ridership numbers. The BNTS was one of the few systems in the province where Covid-19 had little effect on ridership numbers.

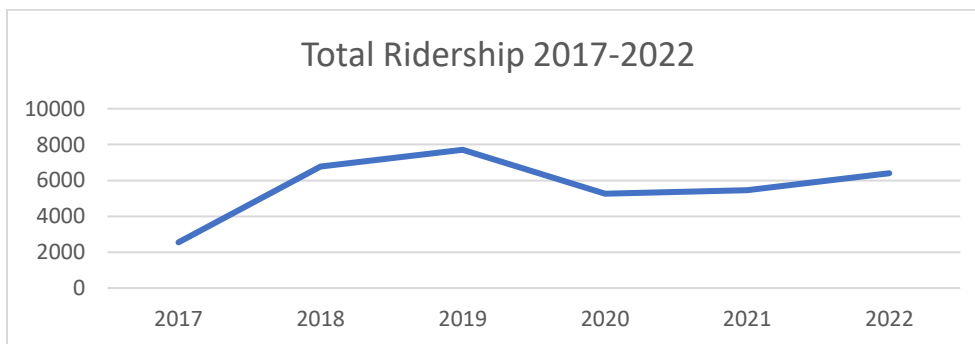
Monthly Ridership 2017-2022

Route 161 – Burns Lake to Prince George

YR	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2022	318	306	427	290	310	368	293	446	319	440	399	402	4318
2021	227	249	353	253	295	301	364	357	285	324	249	312	3569
2020	423	430	328	112	198	275	258	170	268	326	228	273	3289
2019	443	272	451	432	420	395	496	249	413	503	554	512	5140
2018	361	299	394	306	491	410	433	368	364	460	473	374	4733
2017							261	316	288	339	275	362	1841

Route 162 – Burns Lake to Smithers

YR	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2022	130	110	204	182	186	164	173	241	144	175	174	195	2078
2021	125	118	164	158	136	242	176	163	118	150	161	135	1846
2020	166	239	158	114	107	190	194	97	192	189	182	144	1972
2019	216	161	210	266	228	226	232	86	206	185	325	227	2568
2018	230	95	121	160	211	195	166	189	166	175	190	148	2046
2017							153	123	90	131	90	120	707



A survey of riders was conducted in 2017 (November), 2018 (March, July, and December), and 2019 (May and November) to better understand where transit riders live. A total of 23% of riders filled out the survey. Results indicate that rural ridership was slightly higher than municipal ridership. The survey report was presented at the [October 2020 Regional Transit Committee meeting](#) (link).

Operating Costs

A breakdown of the budget for the transit service in 2023 is outlined below.

Revenue	
Municipal Taxation	\$89,500
City of PG / First Nations Partners	\$52,500
BC Transit Grant	\$9,000
User Fees	\$24,000
2022 surplus	\$36,500
Total	\$211,500
Expenses	
BC Transit AOA	\$170,000 (net \$140,000 after revenue)
Salary and Benefits	\$22,000
Other	\$24,000
Total	\$211,500

The surplus from 2022 was due to Covid Grant Funding of \$37,572

First Nations Contribution

First Nations participation in the service is limited. Of the six on-route First Nation communities 4 do not contribute consistently. First Nation funding for the last two years has totalled \$2,500 annually. None of the off-route communities contribute. First Nations participation is on an annual basis and is not secured by agreement.

Staff have initiated preliminary discussions with BC Transit's Manager of Indigenous Relations regarding First Nations participation in the service that is consistent, equitable, and manageable for the RDBN.

Transit Service Future Plan

BC Transit has recently completed a draft Transit Service Future Plan based on a review of the performance of the system and customer's input. The plan identifies measures that may be taken to further support and improve the service moving forward. BC Transit will be presenting this draft plan at the June 8, 2023, Transit Committee meeting.

THE PROPOSED BYLAW AMENDMENTS AND TAXATION

The RDBN is expected to reach the taxation limit established under "Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Regional Public Transit and Para-Transit (Highway 16) Service Establishment Bylaw No. 1790, 2016" in 2024. The bylaw must be amended in 2023 for the service to continue as structured.

At the June 4, 2020 Rural / Agriculture Committee Meeting staff recommended that Bylaw No. 1970 be amended to include Electoral Areas and increase the maximum requisition amount to \$150,000. Consideration of this recommendation was deferred. A memo was brought back to the November 5th 2020 Rural / Agriculture Committee Meeting regarding Electoral Area participation in the BNTS. The Committee received the memo and provided no further direction to staff.

The issue was again raised with the Board at their January 2022 Board meeting. At this meeting staff were directed to discuss the report back to the Board with recommendations regarding amendments to "Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Regional Public Transit and Para-Transit (Highway 16) Service Establishment Bylaw No. 1790, 2016" to include Electoral Areas and increase the requisition limit following further discussions at the Rural / Agriculture Committee.

Taxation Breakdown Scenarios for 2024

The table below shows the projected taxation options for the BNTS in 2024, compared to 2023 taxation. The increased costs in 2024 results from the end of BC Transit's funding of 25% of the cost of the RDBN's Transit Coordinator position in 2023, and an overall general increase in operating costs.

Contributor	\$90,000 Taxation In 2023	\$135,000 Taxation Projected 2024	%	\$135,000 Taxation Projected 2024	%
Smithers	\$28,111	\$42,166	31%	\$23,400	17.3%
Telkwa	\$7,704	\$11,557	8.5%	\$6,413	4.8%
Houston	\$15,953	\$23,929	17.5%	\$13,279	9.8%
Granisle	\$352	\$528	0.5%	\$293	0.2%
Burns Lake	\$8,671	\$13,007	9.5%	\$7,218	5.3%
Fraser Lake	\$5,044	\$7,566	5.5%	\$4,199	3.1%
Fort St. James	\$1,449	\$2,173	1.6	\$1,206	0.9%
Vanderhoof	\$22,716	\$34,074	25%	\$18,910	14.0%
Electoral Area "A"				\$24,309	18.0%
Electoral Area "B"				\$7,423	5.5%
Electoral Area "C" (1/5 cost				\$1,102	0.8%
Electoral Area "D"				\$6,992	5.2%
Electoral Area "E" (1/5 cost)				\$1,316	1.0%
Electoral Area "F"				\$15,303	11.3%
Electoral Area "G"				\$3,637	2.7%
TOTAL	\$90,000	\$135,000	100%	\$135,000	100%

Staff's opinion is that the BNTS functions as a regional service and is important to the rural residents and the region's First Nations. Therefore, it is reasonable for the Electoral Areas to participate in support of the service - if it is to continue. Electoral Area participation would also help resolve infrastructure funding challenges associated with maintaining infrastructure (capital cost-bus replacement) and improving service outside of municipalities.

THE BYLAW AMENDMENT PROCESS

The process to amend "Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Regional Public Transit and Para-Transit (Highway 16) Service Establishment Bylaw No. 1790, 2016" to include Electoral Areas and increase the requisition limit includes the following steps.

Step 1 - Confirmation of Bylaw amendment (May 18, 2023)

Step 2 - Rural / Agriculture Committee regarding Electoral Area participation (June 8, 2023)

Step 3 - Board 1st, 2nd, 3rd readings of Bylaw 1790 amendment bylaw (June, 22, 2023)

Step 4 - Municipal Council's authorization of Bylaw 1790 amendment bylaw (August 2023)

Step 5 - Submission of Bylaw 1790 amendment bylaw to Province (September, 2023)

Step 6 - Provincial approval of Bylaw 1790 amendments 60 day estimate (November, 2023)

Step 7 - Board adoption of Bylaw 1790 amendment bylaw (December, 2023)

The bylaw can be amended with the consent of at least 2/3 of the participants. This includes 2/3 of the eight current participating areas plus the proposed participating areas. The Electoral Area directors of the proposed participating areas must provide their consent in writing.

ATTACHMENTS

1. ["Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Regional Public Transit and Para-Transit \(Highway 16\) Service Establishment Bylaw No. 1790, 2016" \(link\)](#)
2. [Transit Service Agreement \(TSA\) \(link\)](#)
3. [October 2020 Regional Transit Committee meeting \(link\)](#).