

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO

REGIONAL TRANSIT COMMITTEE
(Committee of the Whole)

Thursday, November 3, 2016

PRESENT: Chair Bill Miller

Directors Taylor Bachrach
Shane Brienen
Mark Fisher
Tom Greenaway – left at 2:21 p.m.
Dwayne Lindstrom
Thomas Liversidge
Rob MacDougall
Rob Newell
Mark Parker
Jerry Petersen
Darcy Repen
Luke Strimbold
Gerry Thiessen

Director Absent Eileen Benedict, Electoral Area “E” (Francois/Ootsa Lake Rural)

Alternate Director Tom Shelford, Electoral Area “E” (Francois/Ootsa Lake Rural)

Staff Melany de Weerd, Chief Administrative Officer
Roxanne Shepherd, Chief Financial Administrator
Wendy Wainwright, Executive Assistant

Others Chris Fudge, Senior Regional Transit Manager, BC Transit – via teleconference – left at 1:57 p.m.
Linda Harmon, Transit Crown Agency Programs, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure – via Teleconference– left at 1:57 p.m.
Tiina Schaeffer, RPP, Manager of Sustainable Community Development, Planning and Development, City of Prince George – via Teleconference
Tania Wegwitz, MCIP, RPP, Manager of Planning, BC Transit – via Teleconference– left at 1:57 p.m.
Debbie West, General Manager, Nee Tahi Buhn Band

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Miller called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

AGENDA & SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

Moved by Director Bachrach
Seconded by Director Petersen

RTC.2016-3-1

“That the agenda of the November 3, 2016 Regional Transit Committee Meeting be approved; and further, that the Supplementary Agenda be received.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

MINUTES

Regional Transit Committee Minutes – October 20, 2016

Moved by Director Petersen
Seconded by Director Newell

RTC.2016-3-2

“That the Regional Transit Committee minutes of October 20, 2016 be received as amended.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

REPORTS

BC Transit RE: Highway 16 Inter-Community Transit DRAFT Revised Service Options Public Consultation

Discussion took place regarding the suggested changes brought forward at the October 20, 2016 Regional Transit Committee Meeting. Chris Fudge, Senior Regional Transit Manager, BC Transit noted that some changes have been incorporated and work is continuing to address the changes.

BC Transit has requested feedback in regard to the revised draft service, fare, infrastructure and policy proposals by November 10, 2016.

Discussion took place in regard to the buses being purchased by the province and contributing 100 percent of the capital cost and 66.69% of the operating cost for the service for the term of the agreement. The Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure has committed to three years due to their commitment requirements at this time but do not intend for the project to end after the three year term. Mr. Fudge outlined what has happened in the past in regard to the purchase of vehicles when a transit system is implemented. The Province contributes its share and the local government provides its share through loan financing. In this funding model the new buses are being fully purchased with the funding provided by the Province. To have the buses operational as soon as possible buses will be utilized from BC Transit's contingency fleet until the purchase process for new buses can be completed. Standard life span for the light duty buses is five years.

Director Bachrach spoke of support from the Town of Smithers in expediently moving forward with the Highway 16 Inter-Community Transit System. Discussion took place in regard to the preliminary cost calculations influencing service levels provided for communities in moving forward.

Director Thiessen voiced concerns in regard to the cost implications to the District of Vanderhoof, connectivity to travel from Vanderhoof to Smithers, potential ridership and clear outlines regarding ridership. He also spoke to the potential impacts to other transportation operators along Highway 16. The District of Vanderhoof not being included in the organizational discussions at the start of the process was also a frustration. Director Bachrach outlined the hub model wherein there are regional hubs with transit spokes to move individuals to locations with higher levels of commercial, government, health services, etc. Discussion took place regarding the ability to trial the system and can make changes in response to immersing patterns in moving forward.

REPORTS (CONT'D)

Director Parker commented that the original concept for the Highway 16 Inter-Community Transit system was for safety in assisting in removing hitchhiking from Highway 16. He questioned if that was still the priority and/or the priority was also to provide a transit system to move volumes of people. Debbie West, General Manager, Nee Tahi Buhn mentioned that for the community of Nee Tahi Buhn the value is having an affordable means of transportation that is safe.

Director Thiessen indicated the need to discuss the transit system with Saik'uz First Nation and determine their needs and wants. Chair Miller mentioned the challenges moving forward without having full consultation and discussion with all First Nations communities within the RDBN. He noted the success of the Highway 16 Transit System will be determined by having everyone participating. He spoke to the meetings that along with Director Bachrach, he had resolved to move forward from the meeting on October 20, 2016. They recently met with Lake Babine Nation and noted their desire to support Highway 16 Transit.

Director Repen noted that there are separate funds to provide secure hitch hiking locations and exploring the use of technology to provide a more secure way for people who will continue to hitchhike. Director Repen commented on his experience with hitchhiking. He also spoke to the Draft Terms of Reference allowing the ability to participate but also allows the ability to make changes if necessary.

Discussion took place regarding the consultation processes to determine the want and need for an inter-community transit system.

Director MacDougall mentioned that he participated on the Provincial Organizational Committee and there were representatives from communities and First Nations along Highway 16 including Fort St. James and discussions at that time were to have the Highway 16 Inter-Community Transit System complement services already in existence. He commented that Nak'azdli Whut'en Band, Tl'azt'en Nation, Binche First Nation and Fort St. James are developing a partnership to connect transit from Fort St. James to the Highway 16 Transit.

Director Newell spoke to transit studies that have outlined the benefits of low cost travel, economic development and safety.

Chair Miller commented that there is a desire to move forward with the draft terms of reference and discuss the costs associated with the transit system.

Chair Miller thanked Ms. West for attending the meeting.

REPORTS

Reports – BC Transit

Moved by Director MacDougall
Seconded by Director Bachrach

RTC.2016-3-3

“That the Regional Transit Committee receive the following reports from BC Transit:

-Highway 16 Inter-Community Transit DRAFT Revised Service Options Public Consultation;
-Updated Detailed Route and Stop Locations (Oct 24, 2016).”

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

“Draft” Terms of Reference For the Bulkley-Nechako Regional Transit Service Committee

Moved by Director Lindstrom
Seconded by Director Illes

RTC.2016-3-4

“That the Regional Transit Committee recommend that the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Board of Directors approve the “Draft” Terms of Reference for the Bulkley-Nechako Regional Transit Service Committee.”

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

Director Bachrach commented that the “Draft” Terms of Reference identify potential committee members are potential funding commitments. Chair Miller mentioned that the Terms of Reference remain a “Draft” document until the Regional Transit Committee has all partners participating. Ms. West spoke to the importance of working with all of the First Nations communities.

SPECIAL IN-CAMERA MEETING MOTION

Moved by Director Illes
Seconded by Director Bachrach

RTC.2016-3-5

“In accordance with Section 90 of the *Community Charter*- it is the opinion of the Board of Directors that matters pertaining to Section 90 (1)(k) the negotiations and related discussions respecting the proposed provision of a municipal service that are at their preliminary stages and that, in the view of the council, could reasonably be expected to harm the interests of the municipality if they were held public (Highway 16 Transit Cost Apportionment) or information received relating to these matters must be closed to the public therefore exercise their option of excluding the public for this meeting.”

Opposed: Director Fisher **CARRIED**
Director Thiessen

(All/Directors/Majority)

Regional Transit Committee Special In-Camera Meeting at 2:04 p.m.

Reconvened Regional Transit Meeting at 2:17 p.m.

REPORT

Transit Committee Preliminary Cost Calculations

Discussion took place regarding municipal council consideration of the memo titled "Transit Committee Preliminary Cost Calculations." The District of Fort St. James, Villages of Fraser Lake, Burns Lake and Telkwa and Town of Smithers will be bringing the memo forward at their council meetings during the week of November 7-10, 2016 for consideration. Director Repen noted the Village of Telkwa's support for the transit system in principal and recognizes the funding challenges being experienced. Director Bachrach mentioned that there have been discussions with Moricetown in regard to the service gap between Moricetown and Smithers and the Town of Smithers is investigating options to partner with Moricetown to mitigate the service gap. The District of Houston has considered supporting the service.

Director Fisher indicated his support of the transit system utilizing grant in aid contributions at this time in the amount of \$1,000. He spoke to advocating for the use of Federal Gas Tax funds for services such as transit. He suggested the potential and staff to develop a strategy to advocate for the use Federal Gas Tax funds. Discussion took place regarding the criteria for Federal Gas Tax funds.

Discussion took place regarding the startup costs and the allocation of those costs over the current three year term. Chair Miller mentioned that the allocations may change depending on the commitment of partners. He has spoken with Chief Wilf Adam, Lake Babine Nation and indicated there was support from LBN. Ms. West spoke to capacity challenges faced by some of the First Nations communities and suggested that visiting those communities would be beneficial. Chair Miller commented that in conversations with INAC (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada), they have agreed to provide funding for travel costs for First Nations representatives to attend the Regional Transit Committee meetings.

Director Thiessen mentioned that Saik'uz First Nation is indicated to be "On Corridor" and they are "Off Corridor." Director Thiessen suggested having a conversation with Saik'uz First Nation in regard to their willingness to participate in the transit system.

Discussion took place regarding the preliminary cost calculations; there can be reconsiderations and adjustments depending on the potential for rural contribution through grant in aid and other potential partners.

Director Parker indicated his support for the transit system and spoke to the Village of Fraser Lake investigating the opportunity to purchase a bus and he showed his support for that initiative.

Chair Miller reiterated his and Director Bachrach's commitment to meet with the First Nations in the future to discuss the Regional Transit System and cost calculations.

Director Thiessen spoke of his support of the transit system but voiced concerns regarding the cost implications to the District of Vanderhoof. He noted the need for the Highway 16 Inter-Community Transit System to be a regional system. Chair Miller spoke to communities needing to determine the threshold in which they are able to contribute and that there is support to find a solution.

Chair Miller commented that he has spoken to the College of New Caledonia and they outlined the potential benefits to their students in having a transit system. He mentioned the economic and social benefit that a transit system would have in the region.

Discussion took place regarding the constraints of legislative requirements that are a consideration moving forward with developing a funding model.

REPORT (CONT'D)

Transit Committee Preliminary
Cost Calculations – Item to be
Brought Forward to Public
Meeting Moved by Director Bachrach
Seconded by Director Repen

RTC.2016-3-6

“That the Regional Transit Committee receive the Chief Administrative Officer's October 26, 2016 memo titled “Transit Committee Preliminary Cost Calculations be brought forward to a public meeting.

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Director Newell
Seconded by Director Bachrach

RTC.2016-3-7

“That the meeting be adjourned at 2:48 p.m.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Bill Miller, Chair

Wendy Wainwright, Executive Assistant