

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO

REGIONAL TRANSIT COMMITTEE MEETING
(Committee Of The Whole)

Thursday, September 7, 2017

PRESENT: Chair Taylor Bachrach

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

Directors John Illes, Village of Burns Lake
Absent Thomas Liversidge, Village of Granisle

Alternate Director Susan Schienbein, Village of Burns Lake

Staff Melany de Weerd, Chief Administrative Officer
Cheryl Anderson, Manager of Administrative Services
Roxanne Shepherd, Chief Financial Officer
Deneve Vanderwolf, Regional Transit Service Coordinator
Wendy Wainwright, Executive Assistant

Other Gladys Atrill, Town of Smithers
Theresa Fresco, Regional Manager Upper Fraser, Fraser Basin
Council – arrived at 1:35 p.m.

Via Tele-Conference Deborah Bowman, Assistant Deputy Minister, Transportation
Policy and Programs, Ministry of Transportation and
Infrastructure
Tom Clement, Chief Administrative Officer, District of
Vanderhoof
Zoe Dhillon, Special Projects Coordinator, District of Vanderhoof
Lyn Hall, Mayor, City of Prince George
Linda Harmon, Transit Crown Agency Programs, Ministry of
Transportation and Infrastructure
Chris Fudge, Senior Regional Transit Manager, BC Transit
Art Kaehn, Chair, Regional District of Fraser-Fort George
Jim Martin, CAO, Regional District of Fraser-Fort George
Jillian Merrick, Councillor, City of Prince George
Dyra Pridham, Executive Assistant, City of Prince George
Tiina Schaeffer, Manager of Sustainable Community
Development and Transit, City of Prince George

Media Flavio Nienow, Lakes District News – left at 1:42 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER Chair Bachrach called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m.

AGENDA

Moved by Director Repen
Seconded by Director Miller

RTC. 2017-3-1

“That the Regional Transit Committee Agenda for September 7, 2017 be adopted.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

MINUTES

Regional Transit Committee Meeting Minutes -April 20, 2017

Moved by Director Petersen
Seconded by Alternate Director Schienbein

RTC.2017-3-2

“That the Minutes of the Regional Transit Committee Meeting of April 20, 2017 be received as amended.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

DELEGATION

BC TRANSIT – Chris Fudge, Senior Regional Transit Manager, RE: Bulkley-Nechako Regional Transit RE: Update (Via-Teleconference)

Chair Bachrach welcomed Chris Fudge, Senior Regional Transit Manager, BC Transit.

Mr. Fudge provided an update of the Bulkley Nechako Regional Transit Service.

Bulkley Nechako Regional Transit Service

- Very positive response;
- Good results in regard to ridership:
 - This indicates that public awareness for the service is fairly high and information is being provided to people;
- BC Transit reviewing - Is the service implementation meeting demand?
 - Who?
 - Where?
 - How often are people using Transit?
 - Why?
 - Reasons why people are taking transit.
- Information is being collected from a variety of resources:
 - Website;
 - Drivers;
 - Staff on buses;
 - All information collected is very valuable.
- In terms of ridership:
 - At the outset of the service there has been a request for ridership data;
 - Regular monthly reporting cycle;
 - Plan to have ridership for each calendar month:
 - Tabulate ridership;
 - By middle of month have ridership for the past month;
 - Master account sheet – single source of truth:
 - Very manual process;
 - Data includes:
 - Where are riders getting on the bus?
 - Number of riders for each day;
 - Not normal data collection for a transit service.

DELEGATION (CONT'D)

BC TRANSIT – Chris Fudge Senior Regional Transit Manager, RE: Bulkley-Nechako Regional Transit Update (Via Teleconference) (Cont'd)

- **July 2017**
 - **Route 161 Burns Lake to Prince George**
 - 261 passengers;
 - **Route 162 Burns Lake to Smithers**
 - 153 passengers;
- Will continue to analyze ridership;
- **August 2017 – Preliminary data**
 - **Route 161 Burns Lake to Prince George**
 - 316 passengers;
 - **Route 162 Burns Lake to Smithers**
 - 123 passengers;
- The Bulkley Nechako Regional Transit System is in its very early stages:
 - Service has been in place for under three months;
 - Beginning to have an understanding of trends;
 - BC Transit perspective – the number of passengers is higher than expected;
- **Route 161 Burns Lake to Prince George**
 - Awareness that it is a busy route;
 - Two incidents where bus was at capacity and there were pass ups;
 - Tuesday, August 15 – due to bus capacity - three passengers in Vanderhoof were unable to ride the bus;
 - Saturday, August 19 – due to bus capacity - 2 riders at Stellako and 2 riders in Fraser Lake were unable to ride the bus;
 - May have been due to the PG Exhibition taking place;
 - Be aware of large regional events;
 - Could address in the future by having an additional bus.
 - An incident where a passenger was missed due to visibility and BC Transit was made aware of the incident immediately and addressed the situation.
- BC Transit will continue to gather information to assist in determining how the service will evolve.
- **Scheduling**
 - Construction has caused 15-30 minute delays:
 - BC Transit has done its best to mitigate the delays;
 - BC Transit has provided communication to customers to expect delays due to unforeseen construction delays;
 - Slight modification required to address the need for bathroom breaks:
 - Consideration has been given to where bathroom breaks can be built into the schedule and how much time is required;
 - Implement early November, 2017;
 - Making slight adjustment to the schedule due to changing winter weather conditions;
 - Good time to make changes for bathroom breaks;
 - Find an opportunity to make changes that allows for passengers to adjust to the new transit system;
 - Planning in place for possible snow routing:
 - Heavy snow may impact communities and routes;
 - Plans will be implemented if required;
 - Schedulers will be on the ground the week of September 11, 2017 to determine feasibility of the potential changes.

DELEGATION (CONT'D)

BC TRANSIT – Chris Fudge Senior Regional Transit Manager, RE: Bulkley-Nechako Regional Transit Update (Via Teleconference) (Cont'd)

- Work on bus stops continues:
 - BC Transit Planning staff will also be on the ground the week of September 11, 2017 in collaboration with Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure staff to review the potential for additional stops that have been requested.
- **Media Awareness**
 - Article in the Canadian Urban Transit Association's latest Urban Mobility Forum Magazine Cover Story "Creating a Safer Transportation Option for BC Communities along Highway 16 – Implementing a New Transit System."
 - CBC National Reporter Briar Stewart, along with a news crew, travelled on the Bulkley Nechako Regional Transit Bus from Prince George to Burns Lake and Burns Lake to Smithers recently;
 - Interviewed passengers and elected officials;
 - The story will be featured mid-September, 2017.

Hazeltons and Terrace Transit Service

- Hoping to implement fall 2017;
- Awaiting final approval from Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine;
- BC Transit completing final works also.

Discussion took place in regard to the questions asked when CBC National interviewed riders on the Bulkley Nechako Regional Transit Bus during their recent ride along. The questions focused on the travel habits of transit riders prior to the implementation of the service and how the service benefited the riders.

Deborah Bowman, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure mentioned that it may be beneficial to have regular monthly reporting that included data with the ridership for each day of the week and times to provide information in regard to the most travelled days and times. This information would provide the Regional Transit Committee with a complete overview of the growth of the service. Mr. Fudge commented that this information could be tabulated and provided to the committee.

Director Newell mentioned that on Route 162 Burns Lake to Smithers there was no riders for Electoral Area "G" (Houston Rural) due to most riders travelling to the District of Houston to board the bus. He spoke of the number of students riding the bus daily and with the recent closure of the college in Houston that may increase ridership from Houston to Smithers. He also noted that some riders have been able to adjust their work hours to fit the bus schedule. Director Newell spoke of the need to provide a commuter service between Houston and Smithers to allow for more people to utilize the bus service for work. Director Newell mentioned that the ability to provide a daily link between Smithers and Prince George would be beneficial along with increasing the number of commuter trips between Houston and Smithers. Chair Bachrach mentioned that he has received comments from riders in Smithers in regard to the lack of emergency accommodation in Burns Lake that would allow for them to travel from Smithers to Prince George with an overnight in Burns Lake to make the connection.

Concerns were discussed regarding the pass up of passengers and if there has been consideration given for options and solutions if the transit service becomes even more successful and the number of riders continues to increase. Mr. Fudge indicated that due to the higher than expected ridership options are currently being considered and if necessary moving forward restructuring of the service may and will be considered. In 2018 the 30 seat buses will be implemented in comparison to the 20 seat buses currently being utilized.

DELEGATION (CONT'D)

BC TRANSIT – Chris Fudge Senior Regional Transit Manager, RE: Bulkley-Nechako Regional Transit Update (Via Teleconference) (Cont'd)

Jillian Merrick, Councillor, City of Prince George thanked and congratulated the Regional Transit Committee members and stakeholders for the update provided. She noted that ridership may continue to grow as the service continues with college and university students returning to school, work schedules being adjusted where possible and safety concerns during winter driving months.

Mayor Hall brought forward concerns in regard to the safety of riders that are passed up due to the bus being at capacity. Mr. Fudge spoke of the issue being a top priority for BC Transit and noted that BC Transit has recognized the potential safety concern of bus stops located in rural areas if pass ups occur and will review when and why pass ups are occurring to determine potential options to best eliminate pass ups and not have stranded riders at a bus location.

The recent media release by Greyhound to reduce service levels along the Highway 16 corridor was discussed. Director Repen noted that discussions took place in regard to the potential impact of a transit service along the Highway 16 corridor to Greyhound services. Greyhound indicated in its media release that the Bulkley Nechako Regional Transit Service did have an impact on Greyhound ridership. He voiced concerns in regard to Greyhound reducing service levels. Ms. Bowman noted that Ministry staff is reviewing Greyhound's announcement that it plans to reduce service levels. She commented that the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure has been in conversation with Greyhound in the past and spoke to Greyhound's reduction to service on Vancouver Island and a smaller company implementing a successful service. Ms. Bowman spoke of the Ministry reviewing Greyhounds ridership numbers and that Greyhound must bring forward its request to the Passenger Transportation Board for review prior to any reduction in service. Greyhound's announcement to reduce service levels in areas throughout the Province will impact people trying to long haul travel throughout B.C. and other locations. Greyhound's middle of the night times for drop off of passengers in a number of communities in the region was discussed.

Chair Bachrach thanked Mr. Fudge for attending the meeting.

REPORT

July 2017 Ridership Breakdown Moved by Director Miller
Seconded by Director MacDougall

RTC.2017-3-3 "That the Regional Transit Committee receive the Regional Transit Coordinator's August 24, 2017 memo titled "July 2017 Ridership Breakdown."

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

CORRESPONDENCE

Greyhound Canada Applies to Stop Serving Northern B.C., Including "Highway of Tears." Moved by Director Miller
Seconded by Director Petersen

RTC.2017-3-4 "That the Regional Transit Committee receive the correspondence from Greyhound Canada RE: Applies to Stop Serving Northern B.C., Including "Highway of Tears."

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

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Director Parker
Seconded by Director Miller

RTC.2017-3-5

“That the meeting be adjourned at 1:45 p.m.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Taylor Bachrach, Chair

Wendy Wainwright, Executive Assistant