



REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO  
REGIONAL TRANSIT COMMITTEE  
AGENDA

Thursday, June 8, 2023

<u>PAGE NO.</u>		<u>ACTION</u>
	<u>AGENDA, June 8, 2023</u>	Approve
	<u>Supplementary Agenda</u>	Receive
	<u>MINUTES</u>	
2-4	Regional Transit Committee Meeting Minutes - March 17, 2022	Approve
	<u>DELEGATION</u>	
	<u>BC TRANSIT</u> Lindsay Taylor, Manager, Government Relations Re: Draft Transit Future Service Plan – Highway 16	
5-45		
	<u>SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA</u>	
	<u>NEW BUSINESS</u>	
	<u>ADJOURNMENT</u>	

**REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO****REGIONAL TRANSIT COMMITTEE MEETING****(Committee of the Whole)****Thursday, March 17, 2022**

**PRESENT:** Chair Gerry Thiessen

Directors Gladys Atrill– via Zoom  
Shane Brienen – via Zoom  
Mark Fisher  
Dolores Funk  
Clint Lambert  
Linda McGuire  
Annette Morgan – via Zoom  
Bob Motion  
Chris Newell  
Mark Parker  
Jerry Petersen  
Michael Riis-Christianson  
Sarrah Storey– via Zoom

Director Absent Tom Greenaway, Electoral Area “C” (Fort St. James)

Staff Curtis Helgesen, Chief Administrative Officer  
Cheryl Anderson, Director of Corporate Services  
Jason Llewellyn, Director of Planning  
Deneve Vanderwolf, Planning Technician/Regional Transit Coordinator  
Wendy Wainwright, Deputy Director of Corporate Services

Others Jason Alexis, Economic Development Manager, Saik’uz First Nation - arrived at 1:23 p.m.  
Dave Bradshaw, Manager of Transportation & Technical Services, City of Prince George – via Zoom  
Michael Coulson, Transit Planner, City of Prince George– via Zoom  
Cora McIntosh- arrived at 1:18 p.m.  
Lindsay Taylor, Government Relations Manager, BC Transit – via Zoom  
Aaron Thompson, Planner, Service Review Lead, BC Transit – via Zoom  
Nicole Sutherland, Policy Analyst, Transit Branch, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure

**CALL TO ORDER**

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

**AGENDA**Moved by Director Parker  
Seconded by Director Petersen**RTC.2022-1-1**

“That the Regional Transit Agenda of March 17, 2022 be approved.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

## **MINUTES**

Regional Transit Committee  
 Minutes – November 4, 2021

Moved by Director McGuire  
 Seconded by Director Petersen

RTC.2022-1-2

“That the Regional Transit Committee meeting minutes of November 4, 2021 be adopted.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

## **DELEGATION**

### **BC TRANSIT – Lindsay Taylor, Manager, Government Relations RE: Highway 16 Service Review**

Chair Thiessen welcomed Lindsay Taylor, Manager, Government Relations, BC Transit.

Ms. Taylor provided a PowerPoint Presentation.

#### **Highway 16 Service Review**

- Overview
- RT 161 Monthly Ridership
- RT 162 Monthly Ridership
- Highway 16 Service Review
- Service Review Process
- Community Context
- Engagement Strategies.

The following was discussed:

- Ridership numbers pre-pandemic and current ridership numbers
- BC Transit systems throughout the province have not yet returned to pre-pandemic ridership levels
  - o Bulkley Nechako Transit System has had the highest ridership recovery
  - o Will be reviewing ridership numbers
- Coordination of busing throughout the province
  - o Northern Development Initiative Trust (NDIT)
    - BC Bus North
    - Community Transit Bus Program
  - o NDIT is working with each community that received Community Transit Bus Program funding with the assistance of a Transit Coordinator
- Fuel cost consideration
  - o Good news story in Prince George of someone taking transit now due to the high price of fuel
- RDBN working with BC Transit to capture and promote ridership in relation to high fuel prices.

Chair Thiessen thanked Ms. Taylor for attending the meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Moved by Director Motion  
Seconded by Director Lambert

RTC.2022-1-3

“That the meeting be adjourned at 1:24 p.m.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

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Gerry Thiessen, Chair

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Wendy Wainwright, Deputy Director of  
Corporate Services

# TRANSIT *future*

▶ *service plan*

## Highway 16

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2022



# Territorial Acknowledgement

We acknowledge with respect that BC Transit carries out its work on the traditional territories of indigenous nations throughout British Columbia.

The Highway 16 transit services lies within the ancestral and unceded traditional territory of the Cheslatta Carrier Nation, Dakeł Keyoh, Dēnéndeh, Gitanmaax Band Council, Gitsegukla First Nation, Gitwangak Band Council, Gitxsan Laxyip, Hagwilget Village Council, Kispiox Band Council, Kitselas Nation, Kitsumkalum First Nation, Lake Babine Nation, Lax Kw'Alaams, Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, Nadut'en, Nadleh Whut'en Band, Nak'azdli Band, Nee-Tahi-Buhn Band, Saik'uz First Nation, Sik-e-Dakh, Skin Tye Band, Stelat'en First Nation, Takla, Tl'azt'en Nation, Ts'il Kaz Koh, Tsimshian, Wet'suwet'en First Nation, Witset, and Yekooche First Nation.

Here in Victoria we are on the lands of the Lekwungen People, also known as the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations Communities.

***We are grateful to live, work, and play on their traditional lands.***

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# 01 Background

As part of the comprehensive Highway 16 Action Plan to improve safety, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure committed funding on a customised cost-share model to introduce new transit services to connect communities between Prince George and Terrace. This included the introduction or enhancement of services in 2017 in three key service areas along Highway 16:

- Smithers and District Transit System: inter-community service was added to connect Witsset First Nation and the Town of Smithers (route 23).
- Bulkley-Nechako Regional Transit System: A new transit service was introduced connecting Burns Lake to Prince George (route 161) and Burns Lake to Smithers (route 162). Communities along the corridor benefitting from the service including Binche Whut'en, Burns Lake Band, Cheslatta Carrier Nation, Lake Babine Nation, Nadleh Whut'en First Nation, Nak'azdli Whut'en, Nee Tahni Buhn Band, Saik'uz First Nation, Skin Tyee First Nation, Stellat'en First Nation, Takla Nation, Tl'azt'en Nation, Wetsuwet'en First Nation, and Yekooche First Nation.
- Hazeltons Regional Transit System: Existing local services was redesigned (route 163) and enhanced with new service to Terrace (route 164). Communities benefitting from the service includes Kispiox Village, Glen Vowell, Gitanmaxx, Gitsegukla, Gitwangak, Kitsumkalm, and Gitaus.

The funding model for the Highway 16 service is unique among BC Transit services. The Province provides funding to cover two thirds (66.69%) of operating costs for the service. Capital costs for buses are covered 100% by the Province. The local share of operating costs (33.31%) are apportioned amongst participating municipalities, electoral areas, and participating First Nations. Service funding initially for three years has been extended to March 2025.

Providing service to First Nations' communities and other rural communities of distance often have challenges and barriers to supporting implementation. The proximity of First Nations to an established transit system and the close working relationship between First Nations and the Local Governments have contributed to the successful introduction of this transit service along Highway 16, helping to improve safety and community connections.

Future discussion around maintaining and expanding the service as outlined in this review will require continued involvement from all levels of government.

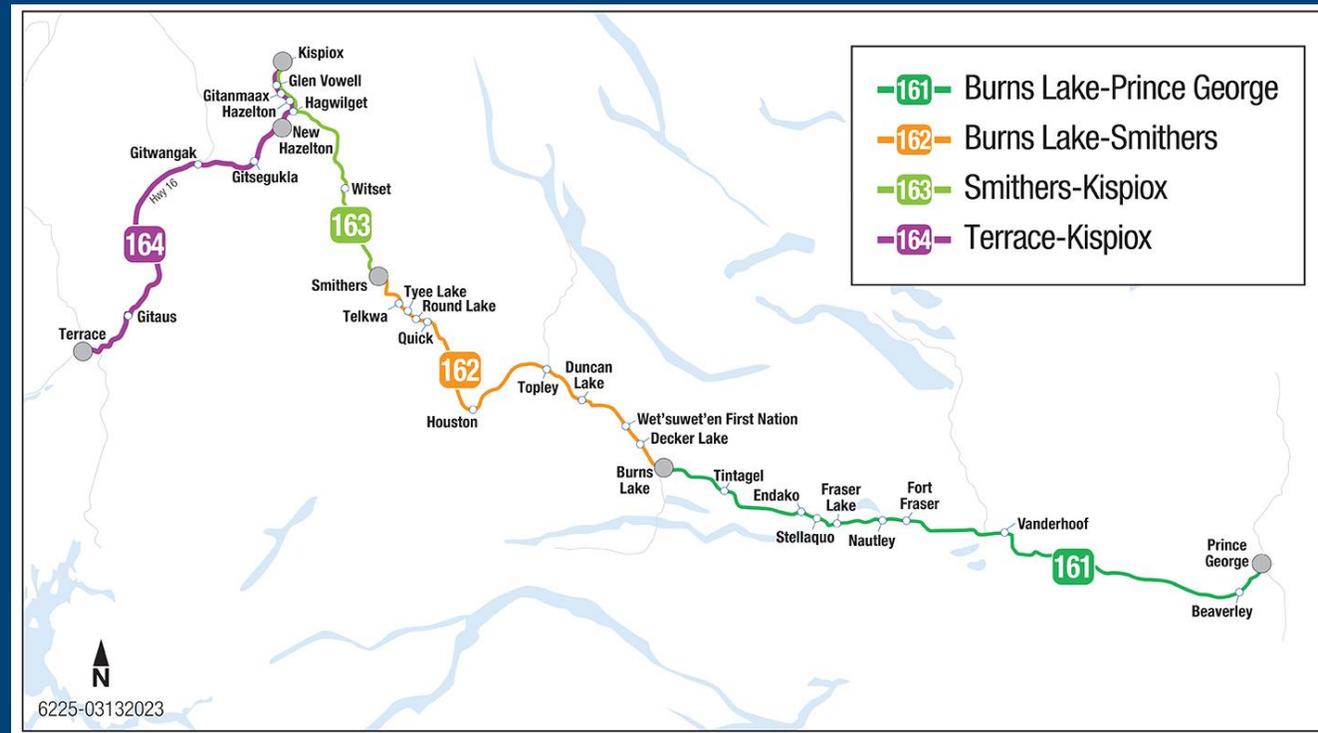
This review provides insights to the performance of the system, how the customers feel about the service, and what measures can be taken to further support and improve the service moving forward.

## 02 Introduction

Inaugurated in 2017, the Highway 16 transit service provides safe and affordable transportation services people can rely on.

This Transit Future Service Plan includes an evaluation of the system and route performance and provides discussion on targeted improvements, optimization strategies for service, and infrastructure improvements. The plan was developed in collaboration with the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako, the Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine, First Nations, and the other communities along Highway 16 between Prince George and Terrace.

BC Transit systems are monitored on a regular basis, with comprehensive reviews carried out every five to ten years dependent on the size and rate of change being experienced by a system.



## 03 Transit Today

Along 575 kilometers of highway between Prince George and Terrace, this transit service provides essential connections for over 33 communities.

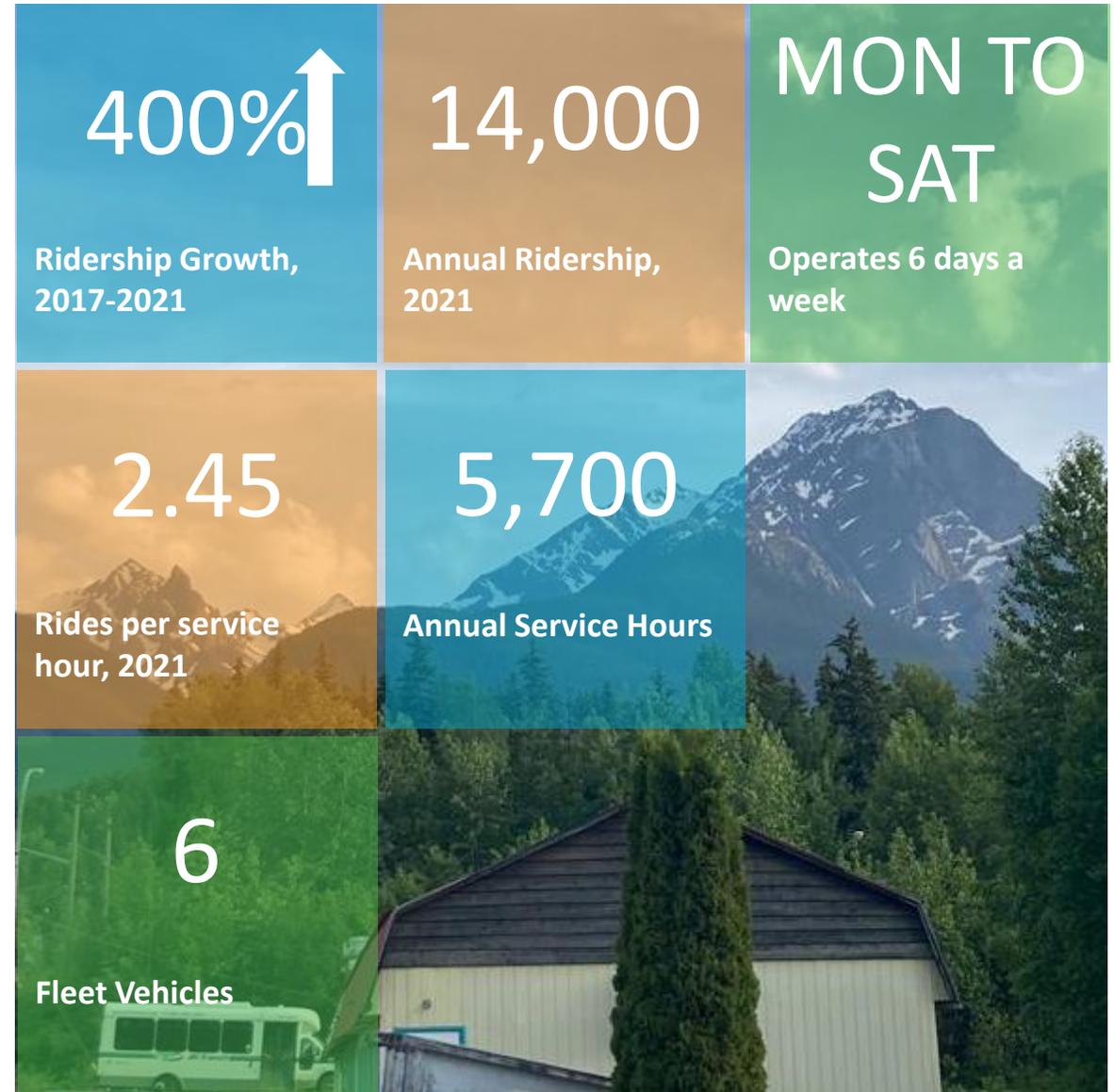
Inaugurated in 2017, the Highway 16 routes have seen ridership grow from 3,200 riders in 2017 to 14,000 riders in 2021.

The Highway 16 transit service consists of four routes:

- 161 Burns Lake/Prince George
- 162 Burns Lake/Smithers
- 163 Hazeltons/Smithers
- 164 Hazeltons/Terrace

Connecting small rural communities to each other and to larger urban centres. The transit routes along Highway 16 are grouped into two pairs of routes operating on alternating days of the week. The fare is \$5.00.

Connections from the Highway 16 routes to other transit systems including: Prince George, Smithers, Hazeltons, Terrace and Skeena. There is no transit service on Sundays and statutory holidays.



# 161 Burns Lake/Prince George<sup>11</sup>

**161 Burns Lake/Prince George** provides transit service between Wet'suwet'en First Nation and Prince George on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. The service operates out of Burns Lake. The bus departs at 7:00 a.m. from Wet'suwet'en First Nation and arrives in Prince George at 11:22 a.m. Customers wishing to make a round trip then have three hours and 38 minutes in Prince George. The bus departs Prince George at 3:00 p.m. and arrives at Wet'suwet'en First Nation at 7:25 p.m.

1

Round-trip per service day

4:22

One-way trip duration

30

Max passenger capacity

3.3

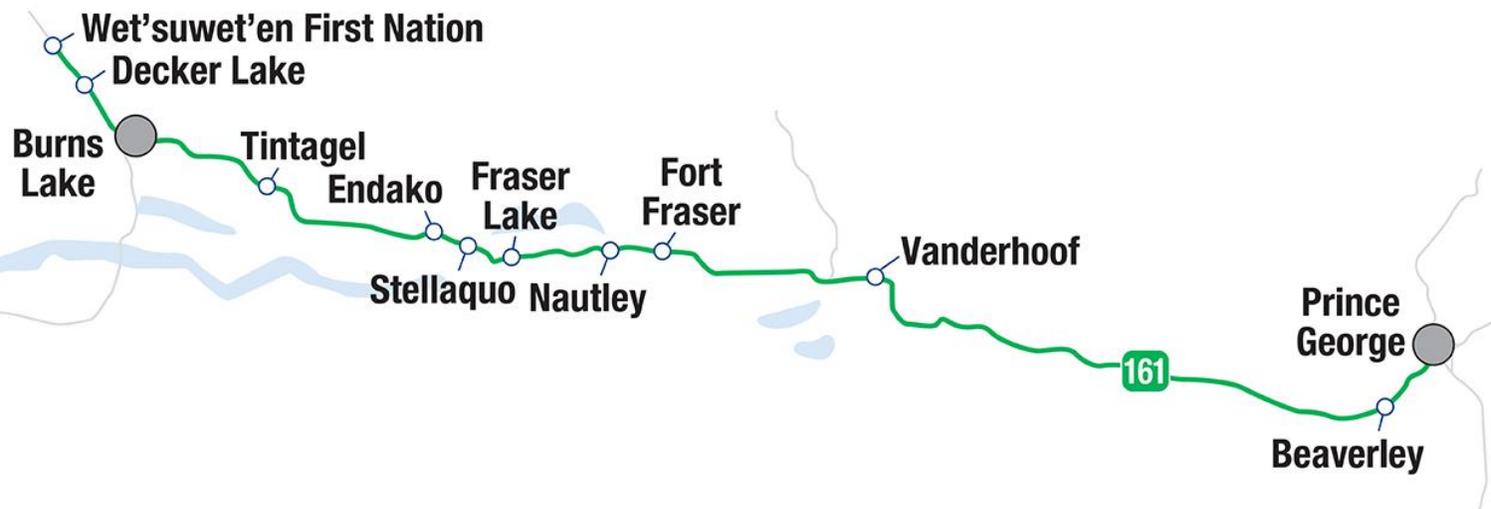
Rides per service hour, 2021

19

Bus Stops

4,200

Annual ridership, 2021

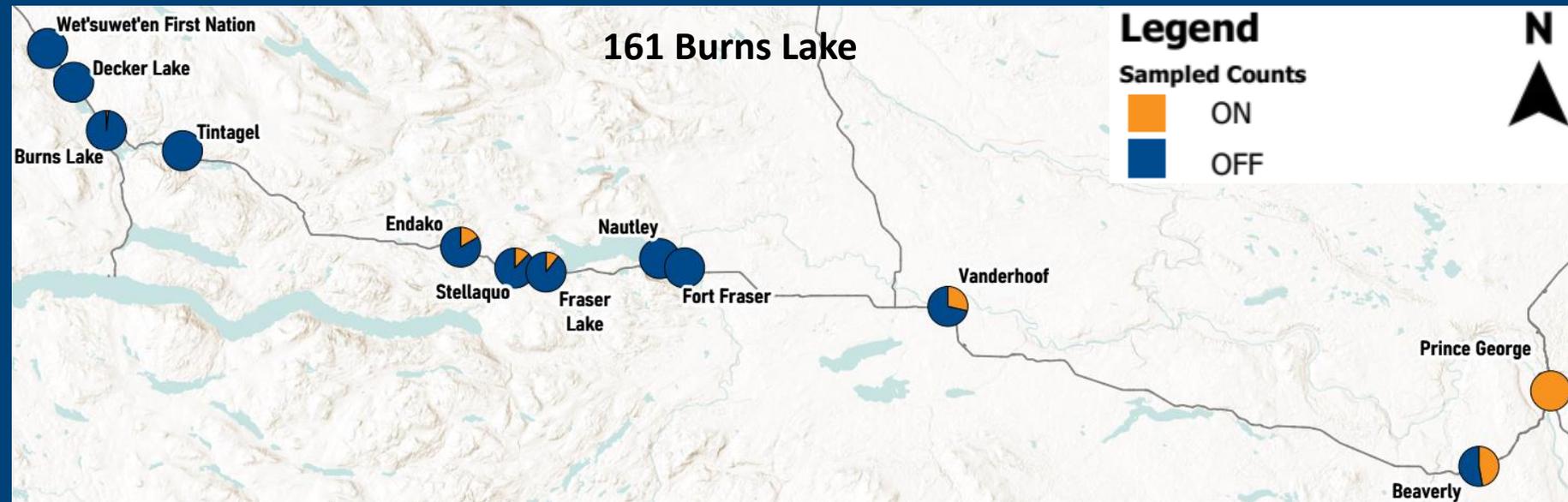
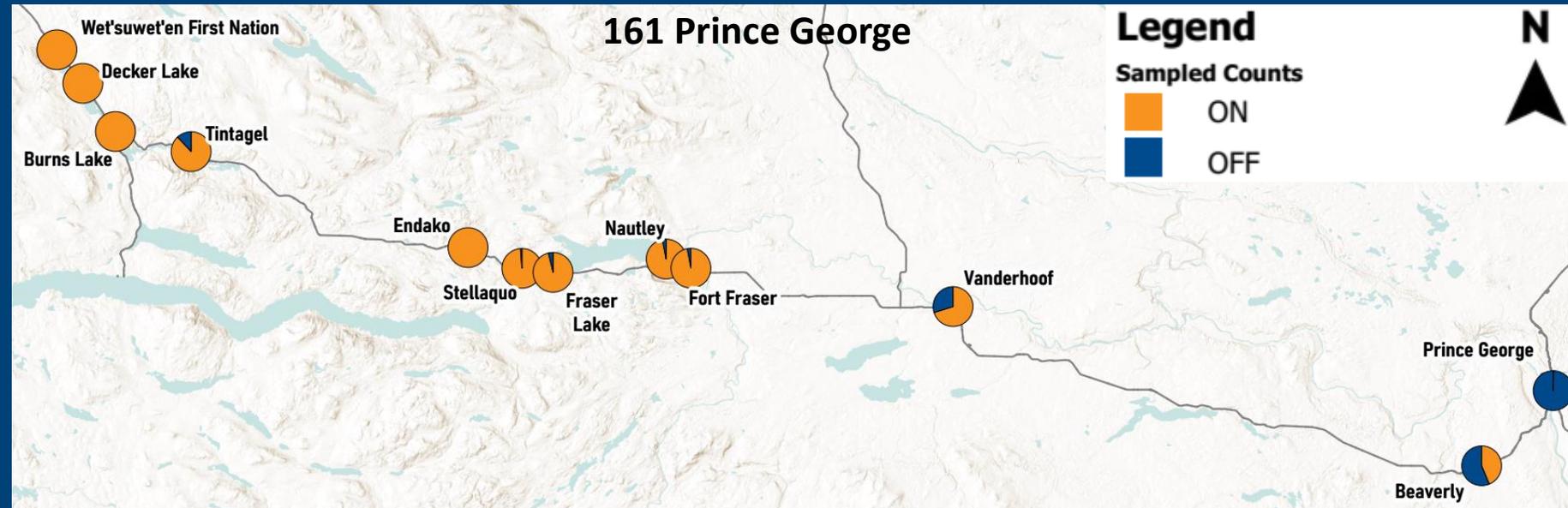


## 161 Burns Lake/Prince George

The majority of customers on this route travel from their home community to Prince George to access services. Vanderhoof also serves as a service center, but with less services available.

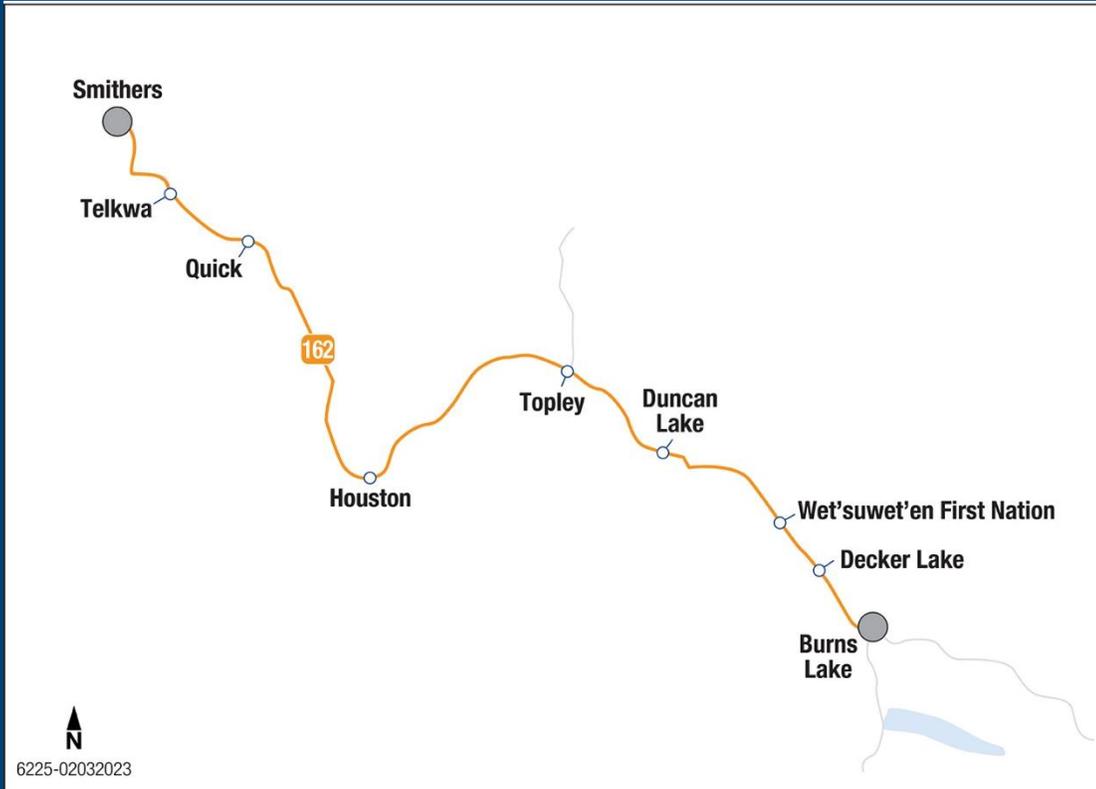
These patterns indicate that customers are traveling long distances with very little on/off activity between the ends of the route. As ridership grows, maximum vehicle capacity may become an issue.

Ridership tends to be highest on Saturday, with Tuesday and Thursday having similar ridership. Ridership is relatively consistent through the week, with only a difference of about five per cent between service days.



# 162 Burns Lake/Smithers

**162 Burns Lake/Smithers** provides transit service between Burns Lake and Smithers on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. This service operates out of Burns Lake. The service leaves Burns Lake at 6:46 a.m. and arrives in Smithers at 9:35 a.m. The service provides a midday round trip between Smithers and Houston. The service leaves Smithers at 3:00 p.m. and arrives in Burns Lake at 6:08 p.m. The service also provides an additional round trip between Burns Lake and Wet'suwet'en First Nation at the start of its morning journey and the end of its evening journey.

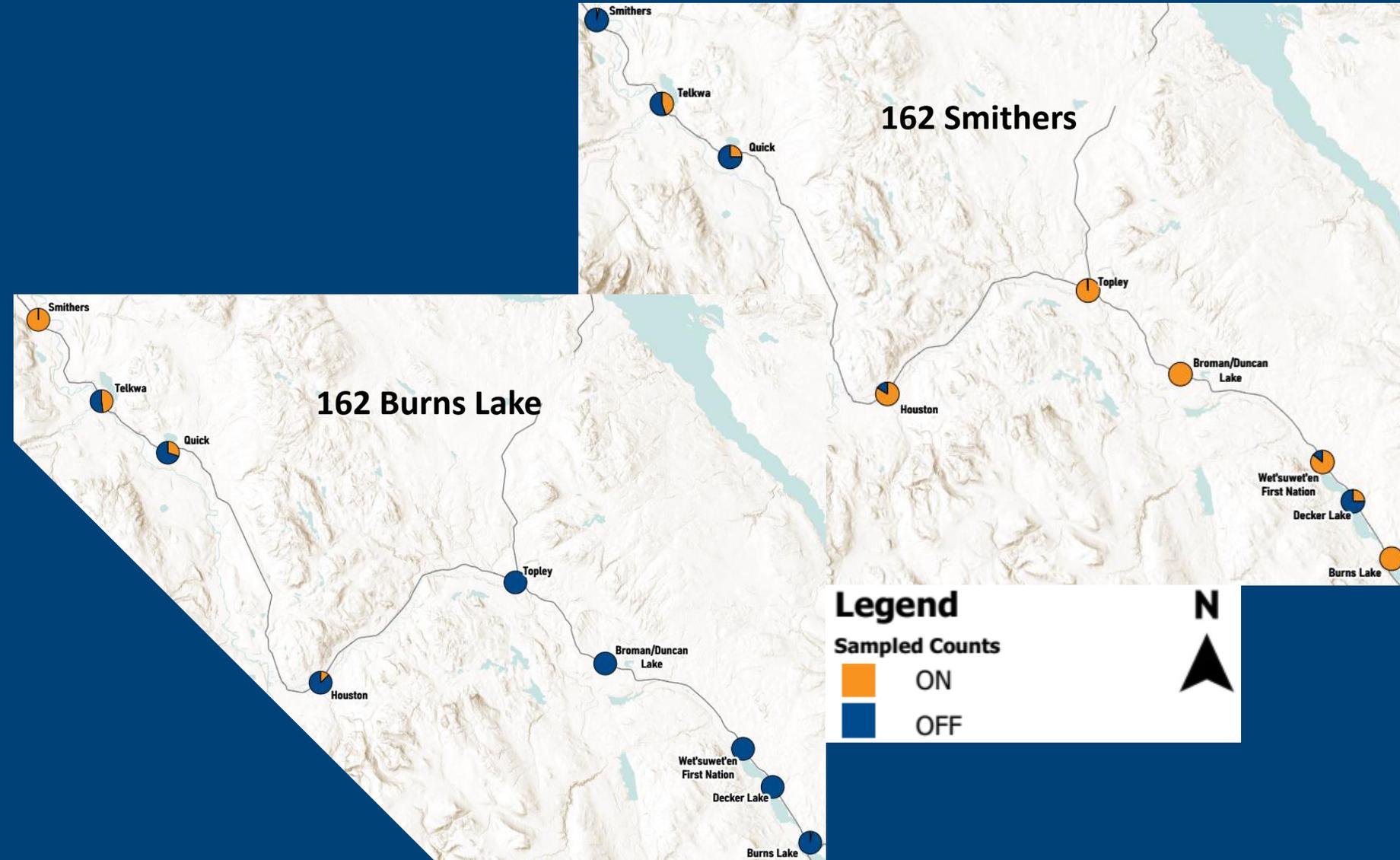


1	3:07
Round-trip per service day	One-way trip duration
30	1.4
Max passenger capacity	Rides per service hour, 2021
12	1,800
Bus Stops	Annual ridership, 2021

## 162 Burns Lake/Smithers

The primary destinations on this routes are the two end communities, Burns Lake and Smithers. There are also shorter trips made, such as between Burns Lake, Decker Lake and Wet'suwet'en First Nation and between Smithers, Telkwa, and Quick.

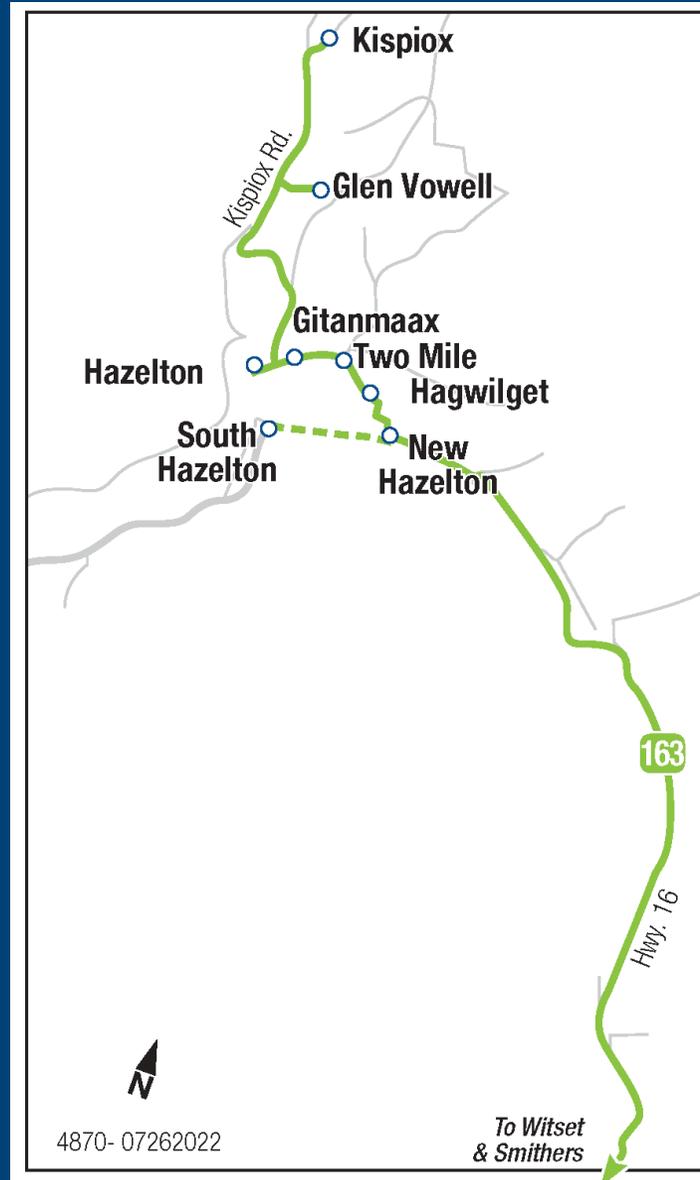
Ridership tends to be highest on Friday, followed by Wednesday then Monday. Ridership is relatively consistent through the week, with only a difference of about 10 per cent between service days.



# 163 Hazeltons/Smithers

15

**163 Hazeltons/Smithers** provides transit service between Kispiox and Smithers on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. This service operates out of New Hazelton. The first trip leaves New Hazelton at 7:10 a.m. and does three round trips between the Hazeltons and Smithers before ending in Kispiox at 8:30 p.m.



3

Round-trip per service day

1:51

One-way trip duration

17

Max passenger capacity

2.7

Rides per service hour, 2021

11

Bus Stops

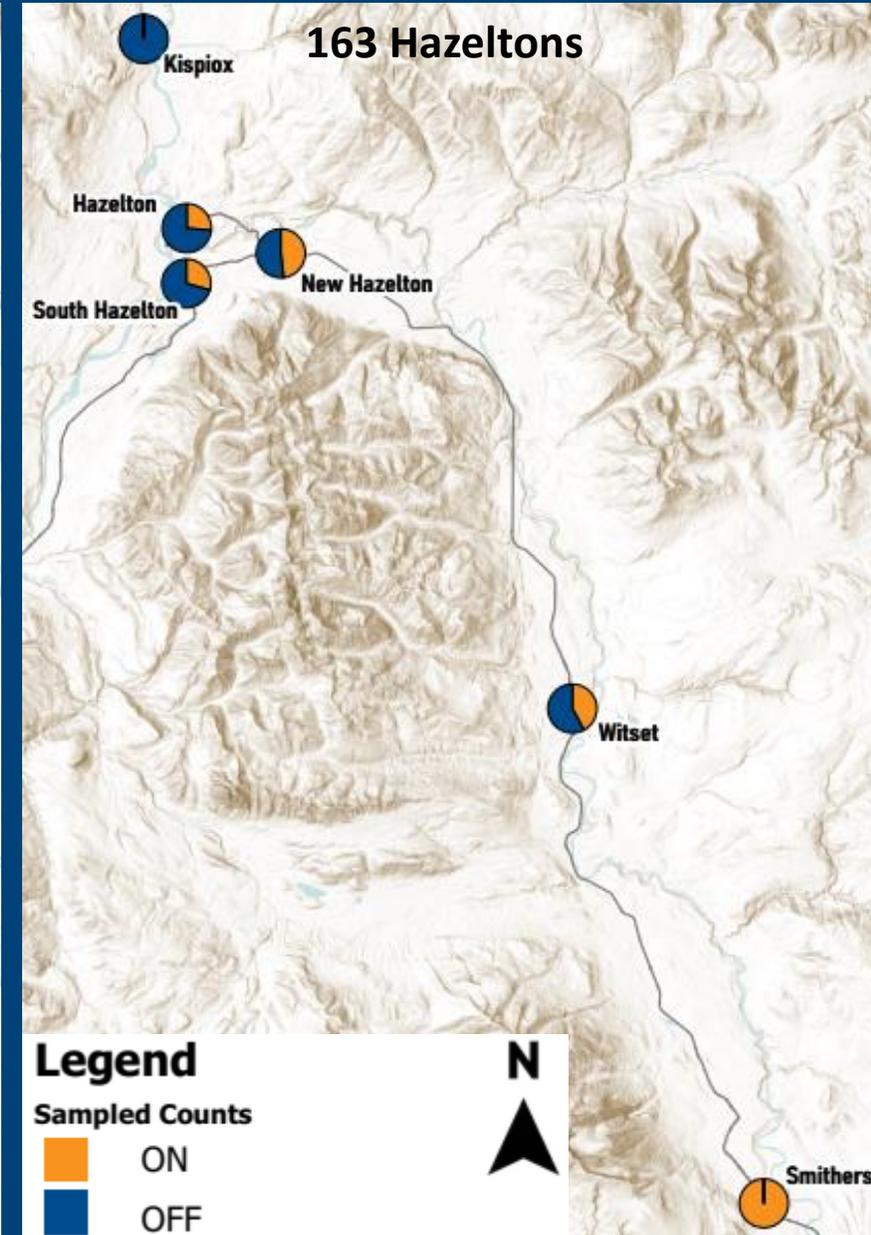
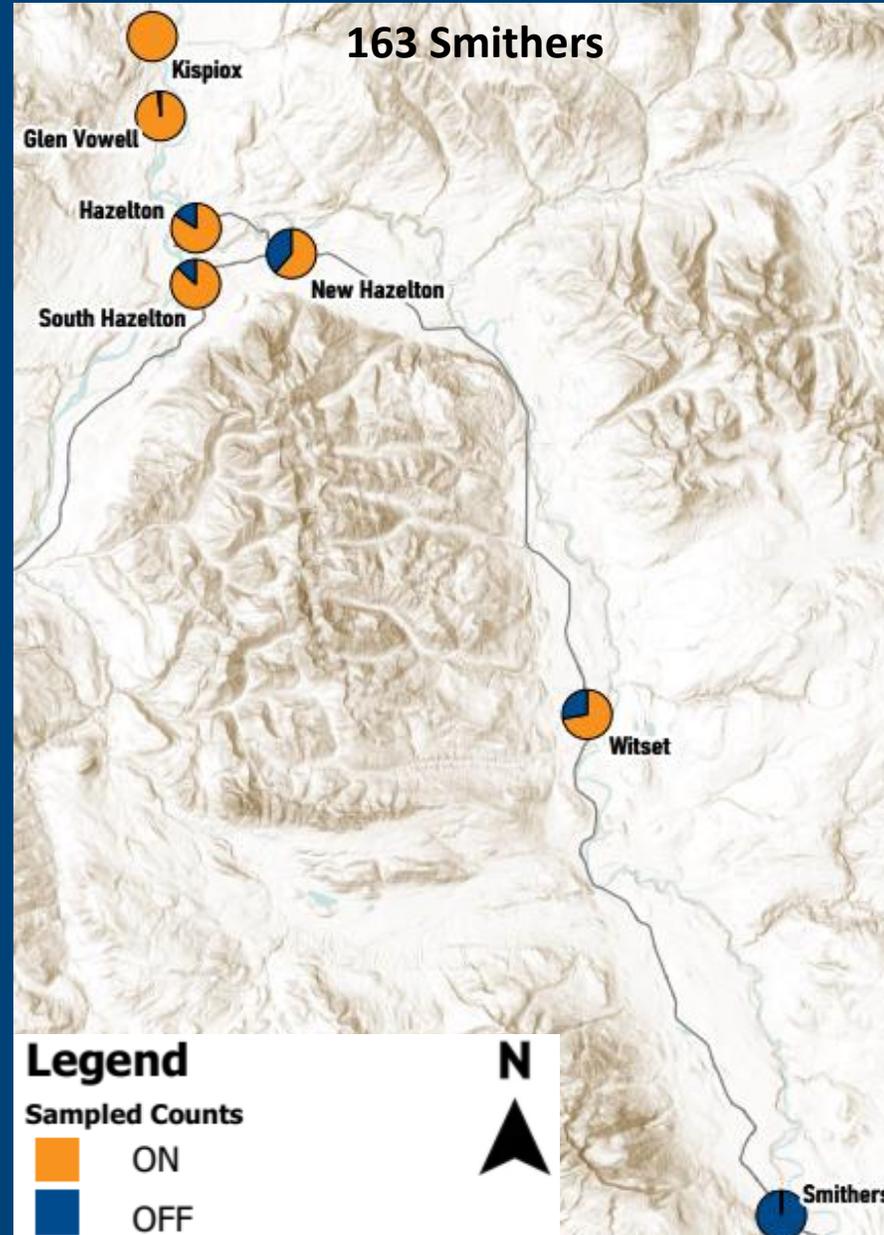
4,900

Annual ridership, 2021

## 163 Hazeltons/Smithers

Smithers acts as the primary service center on this route and is the destination for many customers. However, there is also travel between the smaller communities along the route with more on or off activity between the end points; more so than other routes along Highway 16.

Ridership tends to be highest on Wednesday, followed by Friday then Monday. Ridership is relatively consistent throughout the week, with only a difference of about 12 per cent between the service days.



# 164 Hazeltons/Terrace

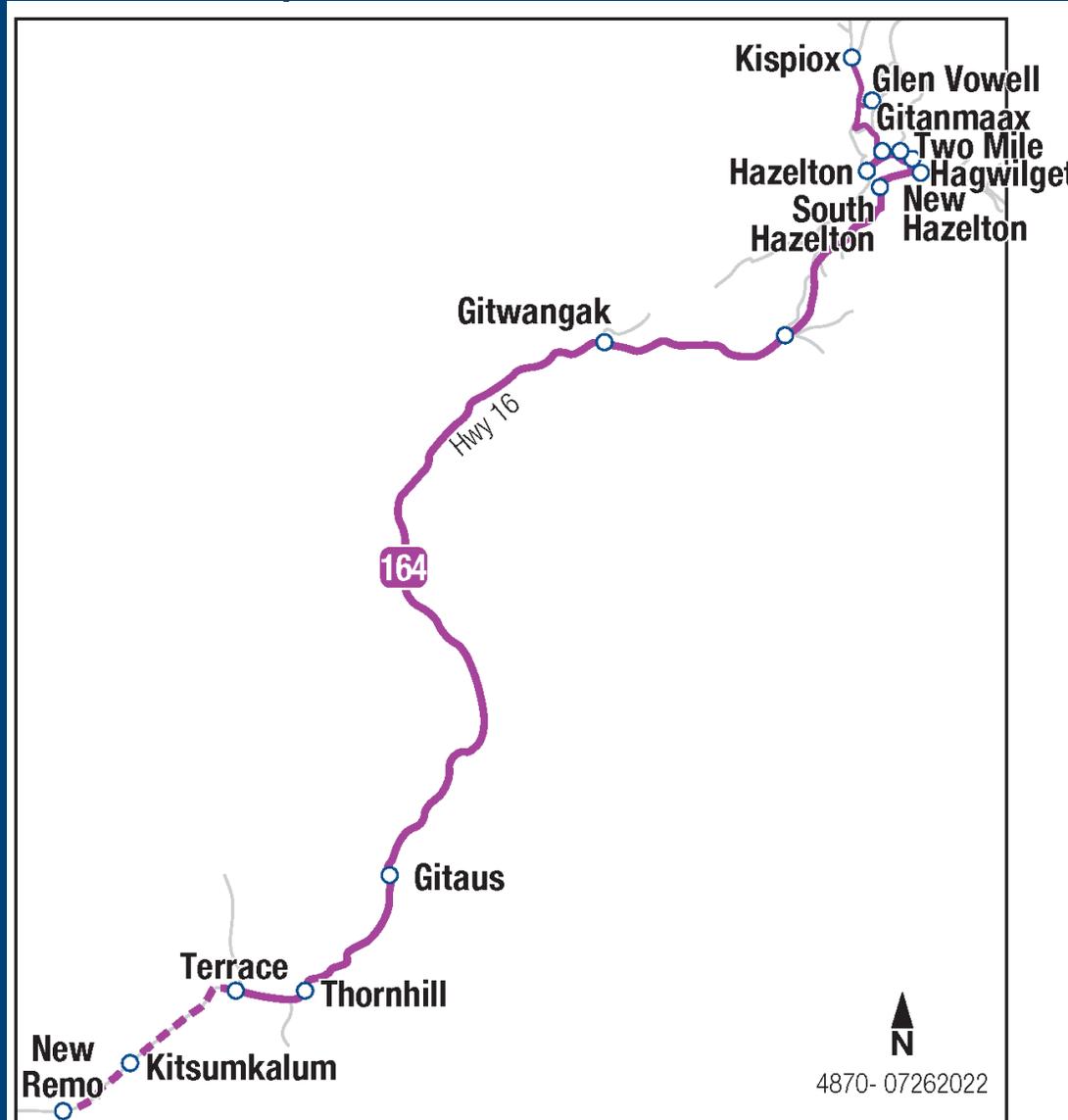
17

## 164 Hazeltons/Terrace

provides transit service between Kispiox and Terrace on Tuesdays and Thursdays. This route operates out of New Hazelton. The bus leaves Kispiox at 7:30 a.m. and arrives in Terrace at 10:43 a.m. Customers wishing to make a round trip have three hours and 43 minutes in Terrace. The bus departs Terrace at 2:30 p.m. and arrives in Kispiox at 5:46 p.m.

On Saturdays, this route provides service to Kitsumkalum and New Remo.

This route connects to local and regional transit systems in Terrace, Hazeltons, and Skeena.



1

Round-trip per service day

3:13

One-way trip duration

17

Max passenger capacity

2.3

Rides per service hour, 2021

20

Bus Stops

3,050

Annual ridership, 2021

## 164 Hazeltons/Terrace

The majority of customers on this route travel from their home community to Terrace to access services. This indicates that customers are traveling long distances with very little on or off activity between the ends of the route.

As ridership grows, maximum vehicle capacity may become an issue.

Ridership tends to be highest on Saturday, followed by Tuesday then Thursday. Saturday ridership can be between 38 to 45 per cent higher than Tuesday or Wednesday.



## 03 Transit Today

Route	Service Days	One-way Trip Duration	Annual Ridership	Annual Service Hours
161 Burns Lake/Prince George	Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday	4:22	4,200	1,300
162 Burns Lake/Smithers	Monday, Wednesday, Friday	3:07	1,800	1,300
163 Hazeltons/Smithers	Monday, Wednesday, Friday	1:51	4,900	1,825
164 Hazeltons/Terrace	Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday	<b>3:13</b>	3,050	<b>1,325</b>

# 04 Engagement

## What is Public Engagement

Public engagement, also commonly referred to as public participation, is any process that involves the public in problem-solving or decision-making. It is premised on the belief that residents should have meaningful opportunities to engage in the decisions that affect their communities. It moves past one-way communication and welcomes residents into the decision-making process by ensuring timely information and awareness of opportunities to provide input before decisions are made.

Not all topics require the same level of public engagement. Based on the impact of the decision or change, and the input that is needed to inform the decision, different tools and techniques are considered in each instance.

## Why do we Engage

We engage because, although we have skilled technical experts working across our organization, no one knows the community and its nuances better than the people living there or taking transit each and every day. When we engage, their input becomes part of the decision-making process, helping our leaders, employees and communities deliver services that are responsive to what the community has indicated as important to them. The engagement process in 2016 set the implementation of the Highway 16 transit service up for success.

When public engagement is meaningful, everyone gains something valuable. We benefit from hearing diverse perspectives and gains an understanding of the public's interests, concerns, and priorities. The public gains a greater understanding of our roles responsibilities and requirements. With stronger relationships and two-way communications, our accountability to our communities is enhanced. With timely access to quality information, there is less misinformation, and residents feel heard.

# 04 How we Engaged

## Mail-out Surveys

Based on the preliminary feedback we received from communities in the region, it was determined that a mail-out survey would be the best way to reach the most people. A mail-out survey was distributed to people who do not opt-out of unaddressed mail. A return envelope with postage was provided to reduce barriers to participation. The mail-out was not distributed within urban Prince George. Copies of the survey were also available at Local Government and band offices.

## Project Website

The project website acted as a hub with information about the project and ways to participate. The same survey that was mailed out was available on the [project website](https://engage.bctransit.com/highway16).

## Promotion

The project was promoted through on-bus ads, ads at bus stops, social media, and radio ads.



### Mail-out surveys

Sent via unaddressed mail to residents along Highway 16 between Terrace and Prince George, excluding urban residents of Prince George. Included a return envelope and postage.



### Project Website

Hub for project information and survey  
[engage.bctransit.com/highway16](https://engage.bctransit.com/highway16)



### Internal Bus Ads

Ads displayed in the buses advertising the project and ways to participate



### Social Media

Facebook and Twitter posts were used to raise awareness of the project



### Bus Stop Ads

Ads placed at bus stops advertising the project and ways to participate



### Radio Ads

Project information was announced over radio

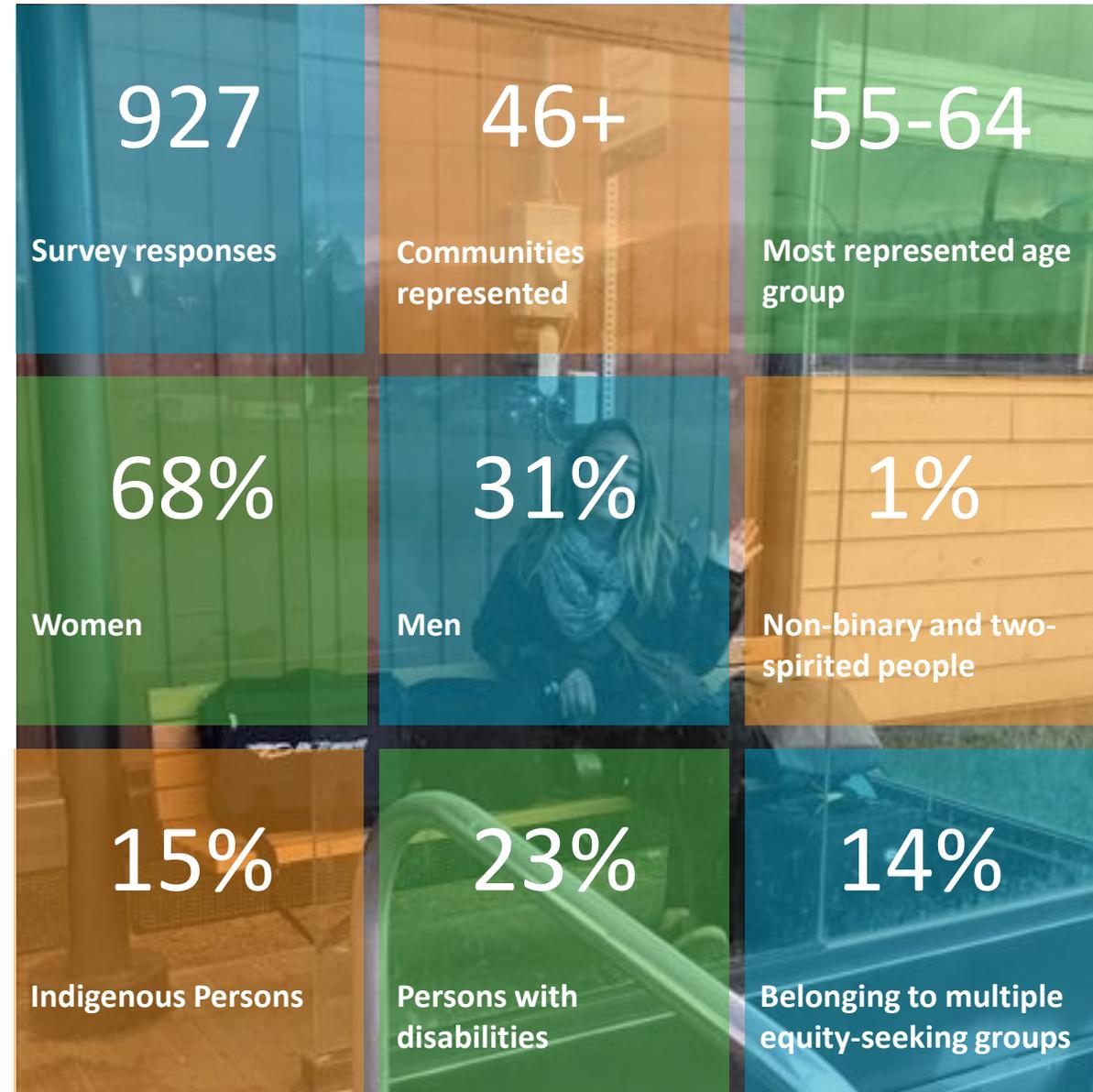
## 04 Who we Heard from

We heard from a diverse group of people spread across over 46 communities in northern British Columbia.

The full summary of the engagement results are available on the [project website](#).

Additionally, we reached out to the transit drivers with a tailored survey for their feedback with 50 per cent of drivers responding. BC Transit staff rode all the routes and were able to speak with current customers about the service.

The level of engagement for this Transit Future Service Plan exceeded expectations by surpassing the number of engaged people who participated in 2016 when the service was being planned. This level of participation from a collection of rural communities show the importance of the service and a desire to shape its future.



## 04 What we Heard

- Customers are generally satisfied with the service
- Customers having to travel multiple days to reach their destination is a barrier
- Expanding service to other communities, such as Fort St. James, Prince Rupert, or Valemount
- Desire for daily trips on all routes seven days a week
- Desire for additional trips per day to allow for more flexibility while traveling
- Need to maintain the affordability of the service
- Desire to improve or introduce local transit service
- Need to promote the transit service and improve customer information
- People are looking to utilize the transit service as they get older
- Desire to improve or add transit shelters
- Stops are too far from customer's homes and/or destinations
- There is a lack of washrooms
- Safety at bus stop and on-board is a concern
- There is a need to address xenophobia and hate



# 05 Transit Need

Between 2016 and 2021 there were no significant shifts in population.

In most small communities, the population changed by less than +/- 100 people. The largest shifts in population occurred in Prince George (+2,705 residents) and Terrace (+446 residents). At a regional level, the Regional Districts of Kitimat-Stikine grew by 1.1 per cent (+423 residents) while the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako shrunk by -0.4 per cent (-159 residents).

As the service is primarily used for residents of small communities to access regional centers, if these population trends continue, ridership growth on the Highway 16 routes may eventually plateau. However, further investment in transit service could increase the existing mode share.

Compared to the rest of British Columbia, both regions are younger with a higher percentage of youths and a lower percentage of seniors. Compared to provincial average, there is also a higher percentage of low-income residents, particularly among youths and seniors. These key socio-economic classes have a tendency to use and rely on transit as an essential service and means to meet their daily needs.



# 06 Impact of COVID-19

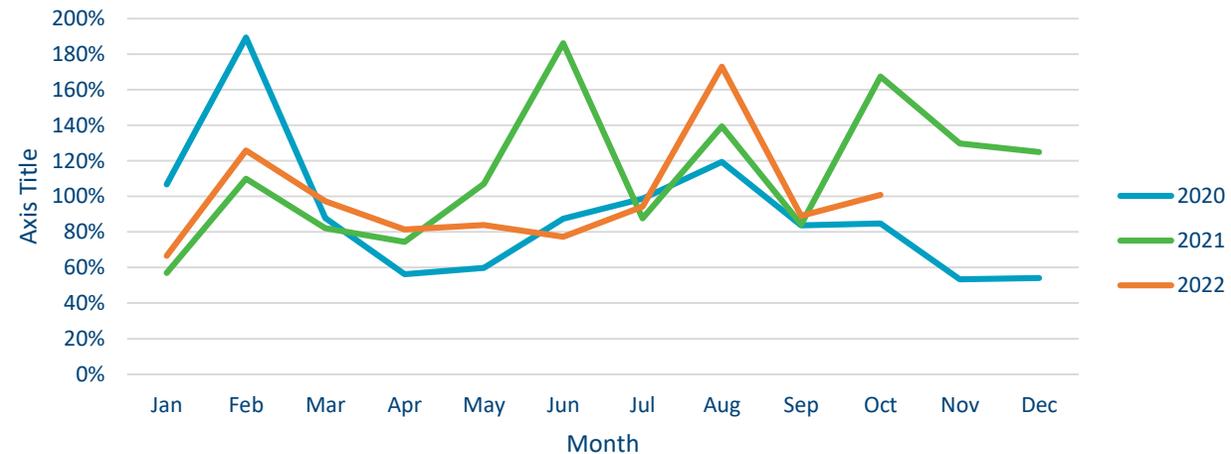
COVID-19 impacted ridership, as the need for travel and services changed and some communities restricted travel to and from their community.

Compared to the rest of British Columbia, ridership on the Highway 16 routes didn't decline as much. Whereas ridership in other systems dropped by around 70 per cent, ridership on the Highway 16 routes only dropped by 47 per cent at its lowest. This indicates that demand for this transit service is less affected by external impacts; people use this service to access other essential services.

Route performance varies month to month but the overall trends are:

- Route 163 consistently outperforms the other routes and its' ridership has continued to grow despite the pandemic
- Ridership tends to peak in February, August, and October

Monthly Ridership Compared to 2019



47% ↓  
 Low-point during COVID-19, November 2020

186% ↑  
 High-point during COVID-19

# 06 COVID-19 Response Plan

## Safety of our Passengers

BC Transit’s top priority is the safety of our passengers and drivers. The key measures are summarized in the image opposite, but the full strategy and details can be found at <https://bctransit.com/COVID19>.

Some communities along Highway 16 were closed to outside traffic due to COVID-19. BC Transit worked with these communities to continue to provide service for residents of these communities while respecting their concerns over virus transmission.

## Support Ridership Return

To support ridership return, the Province of British Columbia has provided restart funding to the Local Government sponsors to ensure the continued effective delivery of transit across your transit system.

## Optimizing Your Services to Maximize Ridership

BC Transit will continue to monitor and direct service improvements to ensure service hours are being effectively used on routes and at times where your community needs them.

The image shows a 2x3 grid of icons on a teal background, each with a corresponding text label below it. The icons are: 1. A trash bin and broom representing cleaning. 2. Two human figures with an arrow between them representing physical distancing. 3. A person wearing a face mask. 4. A sign that says 'PLEASE STAND BEHIND THE RED LINE' with a red vertical bar. 5. A hand holding a smartphone with a magnifying glass icon. 6. A person standing next to a vinyl panel on a wheelchair.

- Enhanced cleaning.
- Physical distancing awareness.
- Face covering.
- Enhanced red line.
- Real-time updates.
- Vinyl panels.

# 07 Strategies, Service Improvements, and Infrastructure

The following sections contain recommendations on how to improve the Highway 16 transit services. The recommendations are divided into three broad categories: strategies, service improvements, and infrastructure priorities.

## **Strategies**

These strategies are broad in scope and involve stakeholders across BC Transit and the local communities. There are four areas in need to strategic action: maintaining affordability, improving safety, expanding promotions and communications, and fleet considerations.

## **Service Improvements**

Service improvements affect how the service functions; changing the routing, There are seven proposed service improvements, including optimization and expansion. The service improvements are organized by ease of implementation, with the easiest to implement listed first.

## **Infrastructure Priorities**

Infrastructure is the built environment that affects both transit service and the customer experience. There are three proposed infrastructure priorities, including studies for larger projects and improvements to transit stops.

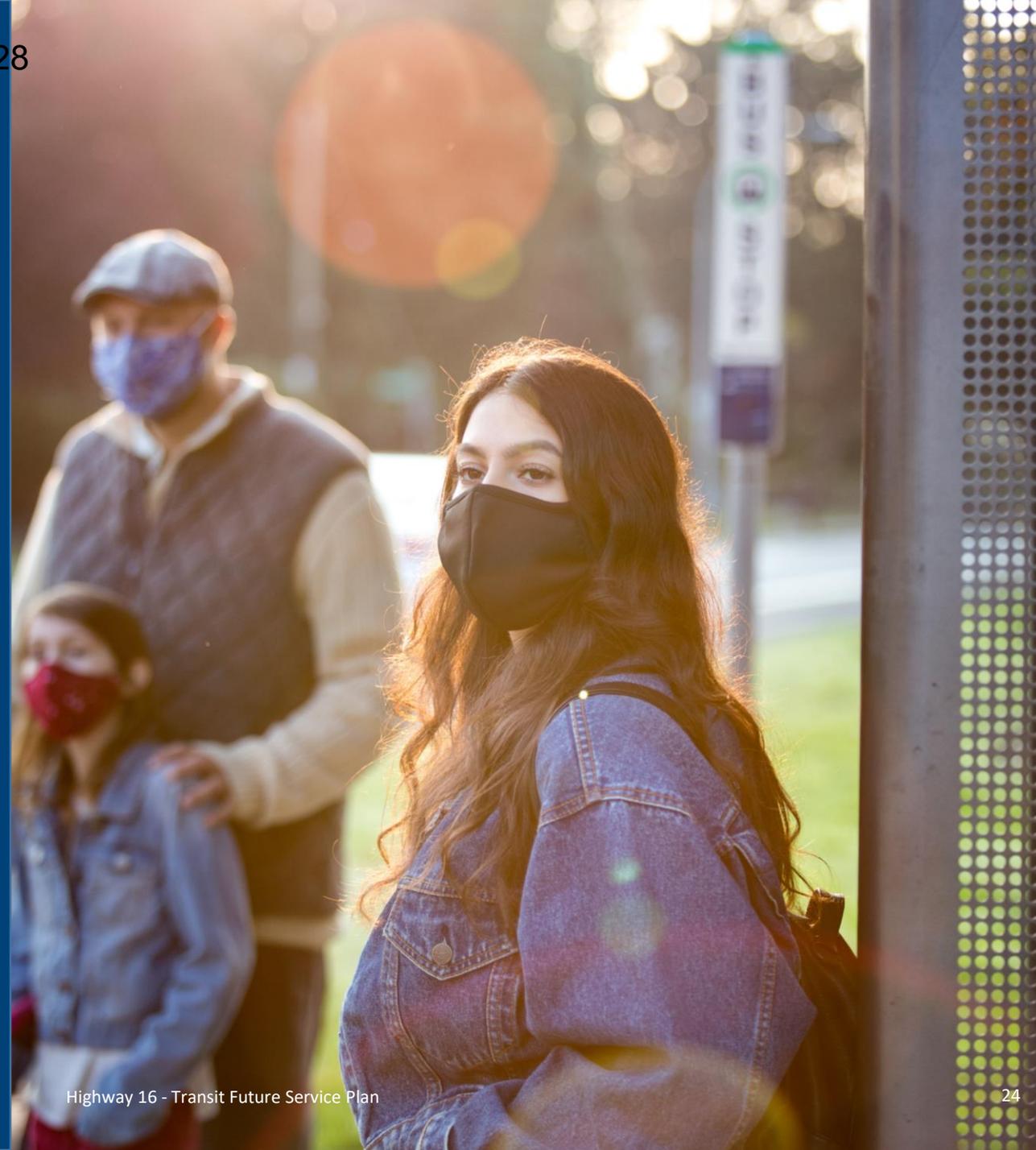
## 08 Affordability

Affordability is the most common reason people use the service.

Compared to other transportation options available along Highway 16, the Highway 16 transit service is the most affordable option, with a \$5.00 one-way fare on all routes.

The **Free Transit for Children 12 and Under Program** was introduced in September 2021. This program also aligns with BC Transit's commitment to delivering initiatives to drive new and effective measures to improve the transit experience and help grow young ridership, create life-long transit users and further reduce congestion on our roads.

To continue to support the customers using the service, fares should be maintained at an affordable level.



## 09 Safety

87 per cent of people indicated that they feel safe or very safe while 13 per cent of people indicated that they feel unsafe or very unsafe when using the Highway 16 transit service.

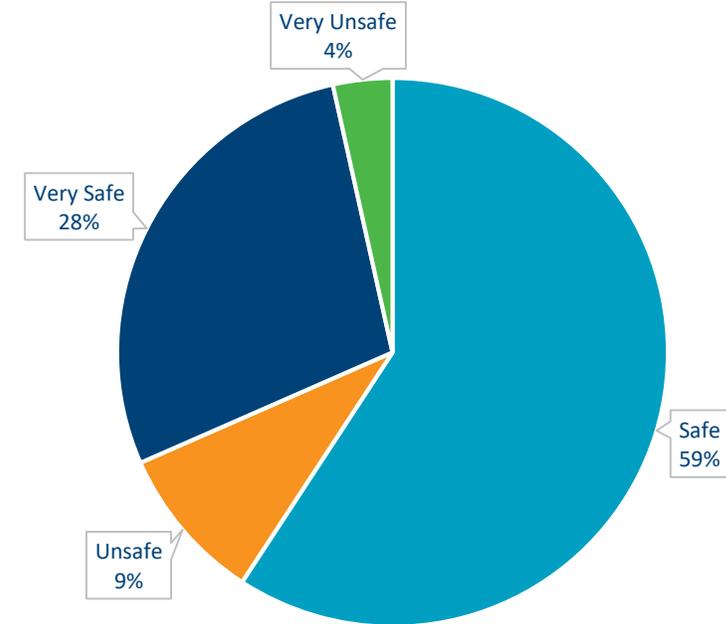
The feeling of safety increases with age, with the youngest cohorts feeling most unsafe and the oldest feeling the most safe. Other demographic trends indicate that feelings of safety are also an issue amongst the 2SLGBTQ community.

Reasons why people feel unsafe:

- Smoking, alcohol, and drug use
- Aggressive or derogatory behaviour
- Sexual harassment and abuse
- Hate and xenophobia
- Traveling alone and feeling isolated
- COVID-19

If there are safety issues on-board or at transit stops, they aren't being reported to BC Transit. To adequately address safety concerns BC Transit needs to encourage customers to report when and where they feel unsafe.

How safe to you feel using the Highway 16 Transit Service?



*“As a woman traveling along or with children this would be my safest option to travel from point A to B. I do not feel safe it is just the safest option to travel.”* – One comment received through public engagement

# 10 Promotion and Communication

Feedback from the public has indicated that additional work needs to be done around promotion and communications. Below are recommended actions:

- Promoting the transit service and the connections to other transportation services, such as:
  - BC Bus North
  - Northern Health Connections
  - Community Shuttles
  - Other BC Transit services (Terrace, Hazelton, Smithers, Prince George)
- Improving how information is presented via schedules and maps, on-board, and through audio sources
- A campaign to communicate good transit etiquette and the rules on-board the bus
- A campaign to promote inclusivity and to address hate and xenophobia
- Developing a sense of local ownership through local promotions, communications, design contests, etc.
- Using new technologies (NextRide, Umo) as communication tools
- Encouraging customers to report instances in which they feel unsafe

## Voice of the Rider

BC Transit believes that in order to understand our riders and prospective riders better, we need to move a step closer to your community and make the community a part of important business decisions. Our [Voice of the Rider](#) panel is an effort to drive community engagement on every project we undertake, understand the satisfaction levels of our riders, and take recommendations and suggestions to improve the overall transit experience.

# 11 Fleet

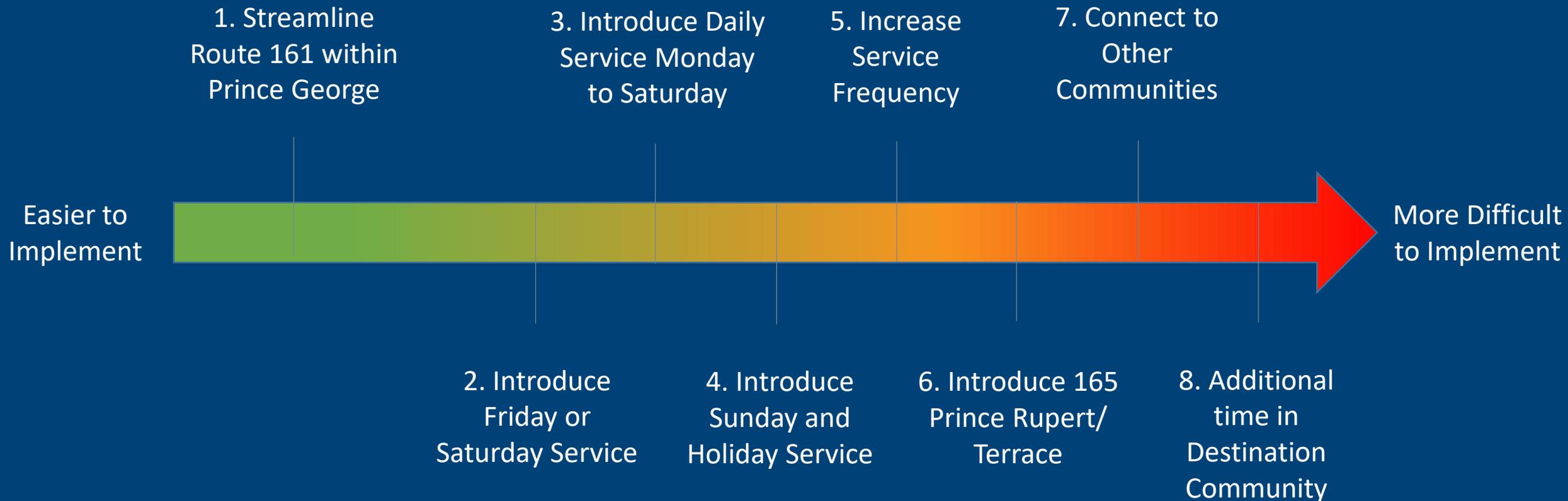
Future decisions on the appropriate buses for the Highway 16 service should consider:

- Ridership growth and maximum bus load
- Maximizing seated load with no standees due to:
  - Long duration
  - Long distance
  - High speed
  - Highway and winter driving conditions
- Allowing for storage of bags and small parcels
- Passenger comfort include:
  - Seating
  - Appropriate heating and cooling
- Accessibility and the amount of accessible seating
- Explore the possibility of an on-board washroom



# 12 Service Improvements: Ease of Implementation

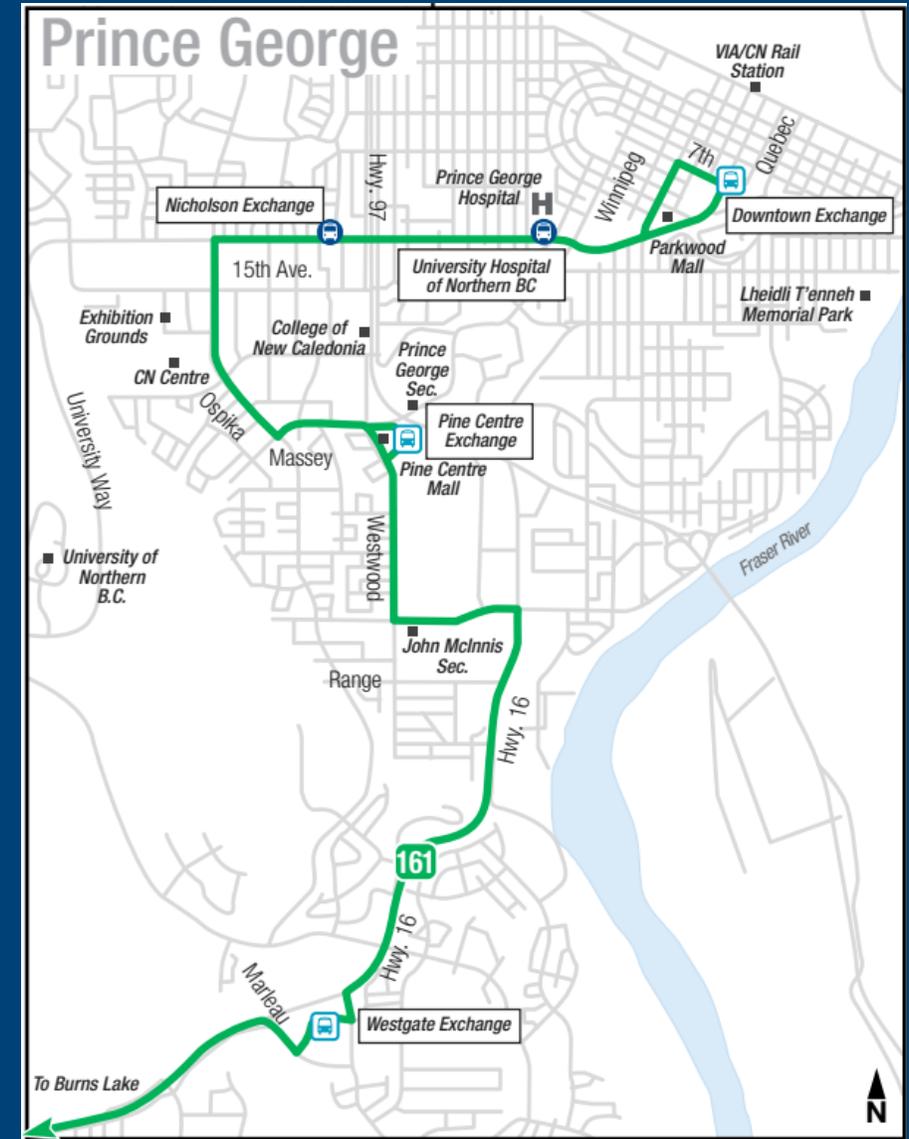
Service improvements range in complexity and the required investment to make them possible. The following service improvements are arranged from easiest to implement to hardest to implement. Optimizing the existing service and scaling up the existing service is relatively straight-forward, while introducing service into new areas requires new infrastructure and partnerships in addition to the investment in service hours and buses. Expansion of service always is dependent on additional funding from both the Local Government and Provincial Government.



# 1. Streamline Route 161 within Prince George

The current routing in Prince George does not fit the purpose of the service and can be streamlined to save time between stops.

Only one stop change would be required: the current stop at the University Hospital of Northern BC would be changed from Edmonton Street to the existing stop on 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue. This stop change supports both the route streamlining and future development plans for the hospital.



## 2. Introduce Friday or Saturday Service

Based on ridership trends and feedback from the public, the first priority for service expansion is to add an additional service day to each route on either Friday or Saturday depending on the current schedule.

- Friday service for routes 161 and 164
- Saturday service for routes 162 and 163

The estimated resources listed in the table on the right assume the current service frequency.

Route	Annual Hours	Additional Vehicles
161 Burns Lake/Prince George	475	1
162 Burns Lake/Smithers	450	1
163 Hazeltons/Smithers	675	1
164 Hazeltons/Terrace	350	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,950</b>	<b>4</b>

1,950

Annual service hours

4\*

Additional Vehicles

\*To be determined during the three-year improvement process

# 3. Introduce Daily Service Monday to Saturday

Scaling up the service from four days-a-week to six days-a-week.

Building on the existing foundational service this improvement would provide additional capacity, flexibility for customers, and potentially open a new market for people commuting to and from work during the week.

- Monday and Wednesday service for routes 161 and 164
- Tuesday and Thursday service for routes 162 and 163

The estimated resources listed in the table on the right assume the current service frequency and previous implementation of the additional service day on Friday or Saturday.



\*To be determined during the three-year improvement process

Route	Annual Hours	Additional Vehicles
161 Burns Lake/Prince George	925	1
162 Burns Lake/Smithers	875	
163 Hazeltons/Smithers	1,300	1
164 Hazeltons/Terrace	700	
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,800</b>	<b>2</b>

## 4. Introduce Sunday and Holiday Service

Further scaling up the existing service to add more flexibility for customers and allow people to stay in their destination community over for the weekend.

The estimated resources listed in the table on the right assume the current service frequency and include 12 holidays; if certain holidays are excluded less resources would be required.

Route	Annual Hours	Additional Vehicles
161 Burns Lake/Prince George	600	1
162 Burns Lake/Smithers	550	
163 Hazeltons/Smithers	800	1
164 Hazeltons/Terrace	450	
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,400</b>	<b>2</b>

2,400

Annual service hours

2\*

Additional Vehicles

\*To be determined during the three-year improvement process

# 5. Introducing 165 Prince Rupert/Terrace

Originally proposed in 2016, introducing transit service between Prince Rupert and Terrace would fill the last gap in service on Highway 16 west of Prince George.

As transit exists in both anchor communities, introducing this service would require scaling up the existing resources and developing an agreement between local governments along the route. This base level of service would provide two round-trips per day, three days per week.

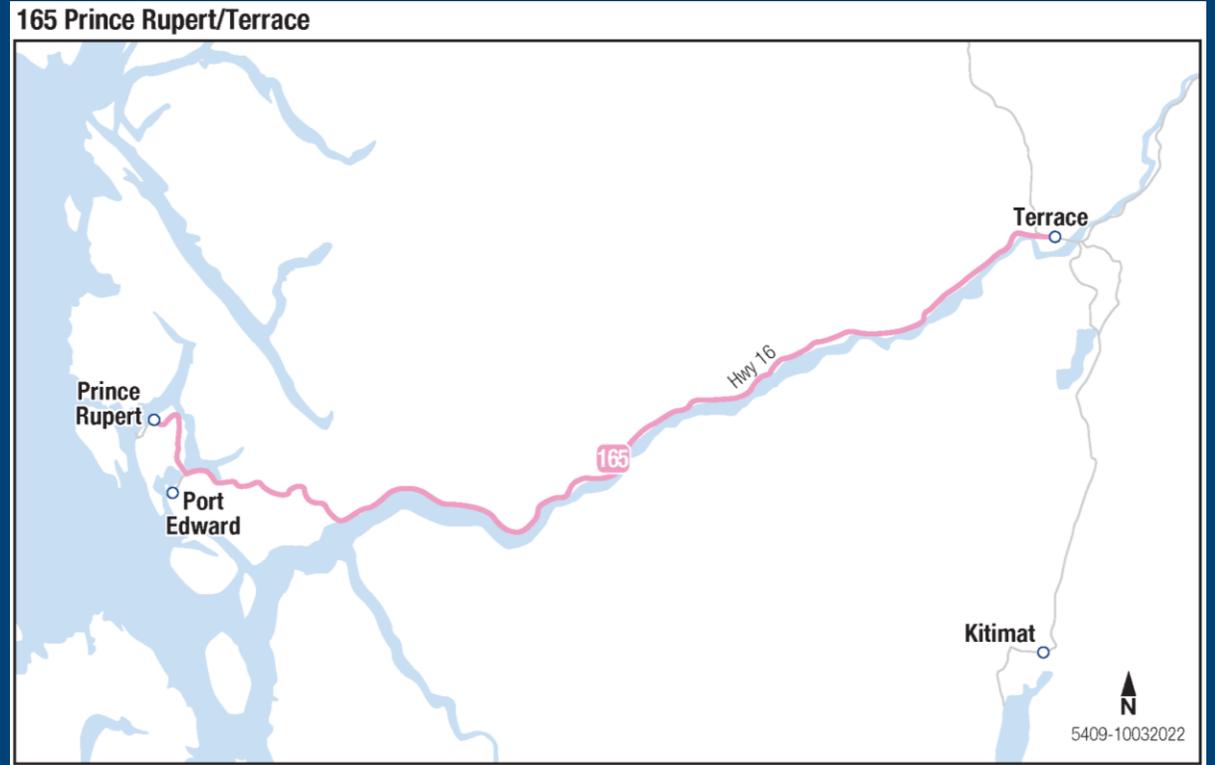
1,600

Annual service hours

2\*

Additional Vehicles

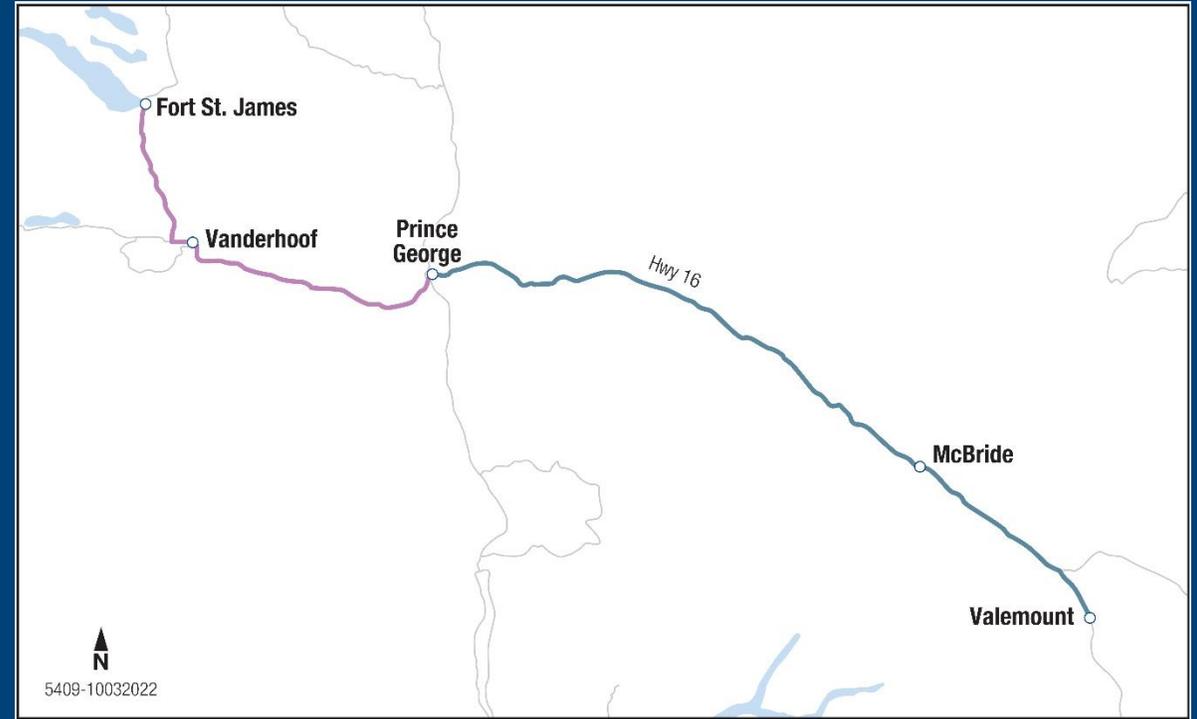
\*To be determined during the three-year improvement process



# 6. Connect New Communities

Based on feedback from the public, there is some demand to extend transit service to new communities. Commonly requested routes would connect Fort St. James to Prince George and Valemount to Prince George.

The home community would need to be able to provide an operations and maintenance facility, new partnerships would need to be established, new infrastructure would need to be installed, new fleet procured, and service hours dedicated. To support this initiative, a dedicated planning and engagement process would be required.



## Fort St. James

1,400

Annual service hours

2\*

Additional Vehicles

## Valemount

1,800

Annual service hours

2\*

Additional Vehicles

\*To be determined during the three-year improvement process

# 7. Increasing Service Frequency

Increasing the number of daily trips by one on each route.

This option would increase the capacity of the transit service and provide additional flexibility for customers. This priority represents a significant increase in the level of service and requires a significant investment of annual service hours and vehicles. Current demand doesn't warrant this increase frequency, however as the service is scaled up and ridership grows this option becomes supportable.

The estimated resources listed in the table on the right assume service on all four routes Monday to Saturday, but does not include increasing the service frequency on Sundays or holidays.



\*To be determined during the three-year improvement process

Route	Annual Hours	Additional Vehicles
161 Burns Lake/Prince George	2,700	1
162 Burns Lake/Smithers	2,600	1
163 Hazeltons/Smithers	1,000	1
164 Hazeltons/Terrace	2,000	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,300</b>	<b>4</b>

## 8. More time in Destination Communities

Customers have indicated that they would like additional time in the destination community to do the things they travel there to do: shopping, socializing, etc.

There are operational limitations that make implementing this service expansion difficult. The Highway 16 routes are long duration routes which means that the driver works long shifts. Increasing the duration of this shifts would require increased overtime and after a certain threshold, would require another driver to drive the return trip. It would also require either shuttling a driver home or providing overnight accommodations at the destination community. While possible, the cost of this option may outweigh the benefit to the customers.



# 13 Infrastructure Priorities

Priority	Description
Improved Transit Stops	<p>Improving accessibility, safety and providing additional amenities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek investment in shelters through the BC Shelter program or Minor Betterments funding</li> <li>• Maintain a living document listing the transit stops and the priority for improvement</li> </ul>
Park & Rides	<p>A Park &amp; Ride allows drivers to park their car and take the bus the rest of the way.</p> <p>There may be an opportunity to implement some small-scale Park &amp; Rides along Highway 16 for prospective customers who would want to use the service but live too far from a stop.</p> <p>A study, in partnership with BC Transit and the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, would be required before proceeding.</p>
Washroom Facilities	<p>Access to washrooms could be improved by installing additional public washroom facilities at key transit stops.</p> <p>A study, in partnership with BC Transit and the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, would be required before proceeding.</p>

# 14 BC Transit Future Initiatives

BC Transit's Strategic Plan provides the blueprint for how we will facilitate the transformation and pursue our common vision of the future to create responsive and reliable services, improving integration with other mobility providers, introducing electronic fare options, building more transit supportive infrastructure and transitioning to greener fleets.

For more information, please visit:

<https://www.bctransit.com/transforming-your-journey>

## Low Carbon Fleet Program

<https://www.bctransit.com/low-carbon-fleet-program>

## Umo - Electronic Fare Strategy

<https://www.bctransit.com/umo>

## NextRide

<https://www.bctransit.com/nextride-faq>

## Engaging with First Nations

## Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

# BC Transit Future Initiatives

### Low Carbon Fleet Program

First deployment of electric buses will happen in the Victoria Regional Transit System in 2023. BC Hydro will help determine the readiness of the electricity infrastructure to support electric fleets across the province. BC Transit will work with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure to refine the anticipated funding requirements, for buses and new operation and maintenance facilities.

### Electronic Fare Strategy – Umo Platform

Smart ticketing providing new ways to pay. BC Transit is working to not only improve rider convenience but also enable mobility partnerships and create new data collection opportunities. Systems will also accommodate a mix of fare products, including cash fares. The system will also be able to operate in areas with low-cell phone coverage/service.

### Next Ride

Door to door journey planning . Provides bus location information to customers via transit apps, enhances operations control and route information for the operator.



### Engaging with First Nations

BC Transit is developing a strategy for increasing engagement with First Nations and supporting meaningful reconciliation. We recognize the need to engage with communities in ways that are appropriate for each culture. BC Transit will continue to work with the First Nation communities along Highway 16 to understand how we can best serve their communities.

### Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

BC Transit is committed to building an inclusive work environment that reflects the diversity of the communities we serve. Every day, we aim to ensure our communities thrive by providing the safest, highest-quality, most accessible public transit – this means listening to and meeting the transportation needs of British Columbians. Future plans include furthering engagement with Indigenous communities and using Gender-Based Analysis+ (GBA+) to integrate multiple perspectives in transit planning, and guide decisions that provide the best experience for all riders.

# 15 Acknowledgments

Thank you,

This plan was made possible by participation from provincial and local governments, key stakeholders and the public.

BC Transit would like to thank:

- Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako
- Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Transit Committee
- Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine
- Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure
- Pacific Western Transportation
- Town of Smithers
- Witset First Nation
- Village of Burns Lake
- Nee Tahi Buhn Band
- District of Houston
- Tl'azt'en Nation
- District of New Hazelton
- Village of Hazelton
- City of Prince George
- District of Fort St. James



# Next Steps

That the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako receive for information the 2022 Highway 16 Transit Future Service Plan.

That the Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine receive for information the 2022 Highway 16 Transit Future Service Plan.

That the Town of Smithers receive for information the 2022 Highway 16 Transit Future Service Plan.

Share the 2022 Highway 16 Transit Future Service Plan with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure.

