

**AGASSIZ, HARRISON
HOT SPRINGS & VICINITY
REGIONAL TRANSIT
FEASIBILITY STUDY**

follow-up to the
North Shore - Fraser Canyon Transit Feasibility Study
conducted in March, 1995

BC Transit
August, 1998

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This update has been prepared to inject into the study process any information that is relevant to the project since the drafting of the original study report in March, 1995.

The background material and the local transit objectives suggest that a lower level of flexible fixed route service through Harrison Hot Springs, Agassiz, Popkum and Rosedale with an ultimate destination of Chilliwack is warranted. Although vehicle and flexible route design can accommodate some of the handyDART clientele, a moderate level of service geared specifically for the handyDART market is also warranted.

Much of what is warranted is already provided by a private service called "The Bus". However the nature of the service provision does not meet the needs of area residents as shown by ridership. In addition there is little willingness by the operating company, based on cost recovery to continue to operate the service.

In light of this information, the primary service proposal is a limited level of flexible fixed route service running between Harrison Hot Springs, Agassiz, Popkum, Rosedale and Chilliwack proper to be operated under the auspices of BC Transit public transit service as opposed to the existing private service. The service will be provided by a 20-seat wheelchair lift-equipped vehicle to capture both the conventional market and the more mobile handyDART market.

The schedule, presented in Appendix A, is designed primarily to meet the commuter market travelling between Agassiz/Harrison Hot Springs and Chilliwack through am and pm peak timing as well as providing access to Downtown Chilliwack, and through transfers, other key transit generating stops in Chilliwack the malls on Luckakuck Way, UCVF and Chilliwack Hospital. Another key stop is the Greyhound Station to provide the possibility for service into Vancouver. Other more flexible markets will be accommodated such as midday shoppers and recreational service to Harrison Hot Springs.

The total cost of this proposal is estimated at approximately \$150,000 to be cost shared between BC Transit and the local municipalities involved. This total cost is only an estimate based on provincial averages for similar services operated. The local share of costs is also offset by revenue. The net effect is a local share estimated at between \$30,000 and \$45,000 based on ridership of between 11,000 and 20,000 and on fare levels between the existing service in Chilliwack (\$1.50 adult fare) to the existing "The Bus" service (\$4.00 adult fare).

Fare levels and municipal apportionment of costs between participating municipalities is the responsibility of the municipalities involved. BC Transit staff can provide guidelines for municipal apportionment based on the experience in other communities to aid in the municipality(s)'s decision making process.

The second service proposal independent of the minibus is a \$15,000 budget for Taxi Saver service. This will provide moderate levels of service to handyDART eligible clients who may not be able to access the minibus service. From a user cost perspective, the Taxi Saver is

feasible for local trips with longer distance regional trips financially unviable. With this in mind, there is a small portion of unserved handyDART users, namely those travelling from Agassiz/Harrison Hot Springs to Chilliwack.

After start-up, planning, marketing and monitoring programs will begin. On the municipal side, this planning should include thought for the relationship between transit and community development.

A service implementation date is dependent upon many factors, primarily the decision making process i.e. the possible assent of electors required in any Electoral Areas. In terms of funding, a conditional request for funding for this service has been made to the Municipal Systems Committee of the BC Transit Board of Directors in anticipation of approval by the local municipalities. All approvals pending, the service could be scheduled for implementation as early as late winter/early spring 1999.

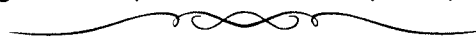


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1. INTRODUCTION

This report is a follow-up to the *North Shore - Fraser Canyon Regional Transit Feasibility Study* which was prepared by BC Transit for the Regional District of Fraser-Cheam and completed in March of 1995. This follow-up is meant to be a companion to the original report as much of the history behind the original process has affected the approach to this update. In addition, much of the information has not altered significantly, in terms of affecting the outcome of the study, since the time the original report was rendered.

The original study examined the feasibility of providing a public transit system throughout those areas of the Regional District of Fraser-Cheam without transit service, specifically the District of Hope, the District of Kent, the Village of Harrison Hot Springs and Electoral Areas "A", "B", "C", "D" and "F" of this Regional District. This update is prepared for two broad reasons:

- ☆ the municipal partner has changed from the former Regional District of Fraser-Cheam to the recently amalgamated Fraser Valley Regional District
- ☆ the time lag involved between the completion of the original study and the present is over 3 years

the combination of which can cause changes to the most appropriate types and levels of services provided for the area in question.

Some of the most significant changes over this time period involve the nature of the original study and its recommendations. The recommended package of transit services was integrated among all the jurisdictions in a comprehensive manner and in many ways was dependent upon approval by all the larger jurisdictions (in terms of population) -- which was not the case -- for the recommended service option to be most effective. Although the recommendation could still work on an individual jurisdiction by jurisdiction basis, no work was done regarding the best alternatives for those remaining jurisdictions that approved implementation of service. In addition, the primary recommendation, which involved the use of private services, should be re-evaluated to reflect current conditions.

Much of the information from the original plan is still valid in a relative sense and thus will not be rehashed in this update. This information includes most of the "*Population and Demographics*" and "*Community Development*" found in Sections 3 and 4 of the original report. For those areas not changed from the original report and that are not included within this update, please refer to the appropriate sections of the original report.

This update report includes proposed service options and their implications as well as final recommendations. As with the original, the recommendations are derived from a combination of:

- ☆ meeting the local objectives of the study as well as the broader objectives of BC Transit
- ☆ meeting a standard base of financial and passenger performance
- ☆ meeting the needs and desires of area residents
- ☆ matching the characteristics of the area to its optimal transit service

2. ORIGINAL PLAN PROCESS: BACKGROUND

Some background information on the process of the original report preparation and the circumstances surrounding this process will shed some light on the entire process to date and thus the rationale behind the changes from this update to the original report.

The process began with a request from the Regional District of Fraser-Cheam to BC Transit to examine the feasibility of transit service provision in areas of their jurisdiction without service. The existing public transit service within the Regional District was and is provided solely within the District of Chilliwack and on a limited basis to Electoral Area "E". Unlike the planning process leading to the expansion of the Chilliwack Transit Service Area to include Electoral Area "E", this feasibility work was conducted as a stand alone study which provided the areas in question with greater flexibility in terms of the scope of the study and therefore possible recommendations.

The objectives of the Regional District and the community-based information collected for the study suggested that a moderate level of transit service was warranted and that the primary focus of service would be a "regional" one rather than purely "local". For the study area as a whole, this focus translated into primary travel to and from Chilliwack and less importance was placed on the provision for local service within Hope, within Agassiz or within Harrison Hot Springs. This demand was from both the conventional and handyDART eligible markets.

Although there is some precedent for regional service within the Province - namely in the Central Kootenays with rural to urban service centred on Nelson - the difference in the Fraser-Cheam case was that there was a myriad of private bus services in operation, a situation which does not exist to the same extent within the Central Kootenays. The primary traditional "BC Transit" vehicle exclusive service proposal for service between Harrison Hot Springs, Agassiz and Chilliwack, for example, was to mirror closely an existing service then provided by a Cheam Tours operated service known as "The Bus", the private service geared primarily to a "conventional" market but which also was partly accessible to a handyDART eligible clientele.

With this service in mind and Greyhound services which connected Hope to Chilliwack in much the same fashion, the primary recommended service proposal for the core municipalities was to utilize the private bus carrier services, and as opposed to subsidizing the "operating company" as is the case with most publicly funded transit services, the transit subsidy would be provided specifically to the users of the private services travelling within the Regional District boundaries. The system was to operate through the use of coupons sold by the Regional District to the user at 50% the face value of their trip on the private service, the coupons used as the fare to ride the private carrier services solely within the Regional District and the private carriers in turn reimbursing the coupons with the Regional District at face value. Because of its similarities to the BC Transit Taxi Saver program, this proposal was coined "Bus Saver".

For the rural areas of Electoral Areas "A", "B" & "C", a volunteer driver service was recommended. This option was recommended primarily to provide the social need for

residents who have no other options for transportation as well as the low level of service required for the relatively small population.

The "Bus Saver" recommendation, which caused the greatest amount of discussion compared to the volunteer driver recommendation, had many merits as well as some negatives. The merits included:

- ✓ provision of adequate levels of service for the populations in question, primarily for those living in the Harrison Hot Springs-Agassiz-Chilliwack corridor (not quite as well for the Hope-Chilliwack corridor)
- ✓ affordable user fare levels close to that on most similar public transit service, similar with respect to the travel distance involved
- ✓ the support of a local business, namely the operating company of "The Bus"
- ✓ the relatively low cost of this option relative to other options, with the actual cost based on use of the service
- ✓ the addressing, in a positive manner, of the issue of public subsidized transit competing against privately operated and funded services already in operation

The latter issue was probably the strongest perceived operational benefit of the proposal as alternatives were the cause of the greatest contention. There was a perception that if a public transit service operated under the auspices of BC Transit and the local municipalities were to be put in place in this area, specifically in the Harrison Hot Springs-Agassiz-Chilliwack corridor, it would put the "The Bus" out of service and thus its operating company out of business. In addition to the service provided by "The Bus", there was also the issue of the negative affect of a public transit service on the Motor Carriers Commission licence issued to Cheam Tours for other transportation services included within their licence.

The negatives of the Bus Saver proposal included:

- × no control of any aspect of the transit service itself by the funding partners (the Regional District and the Province) as the subsidy provided was to the user rather than the operating company -- in this case, the long term objectives of the Regional District, as laid out in the "Local Transit Objectives" may not be adequately met
- × long term uncertainty of the service due to overriding profit maximization goal of a private transit service, which therefore is dependent upon the service being a "success", as opposed to a stronger social service goal of a public transit service
- × the lack of "BC Transit" and its benefits including name recognition as the public transit service provider in the Province and the economies of scale inherent within the corporation
- × overall uncertainty of all parties due to the experimental nature of the service proposal

After presentation of the report to the Regional District by BC Transit, there appeared to be some hesitation by some of the local jurisdictions of the proposals, again the Bus Saver generating the greatest interest. On speculation by the author, this hesitation was due in part to:

- the fact of the service being in place and that decisions to opt into the proposal could therefore be made at any time
- some of the negatives listed above, particularly the third point of not having a traditional BC Transit service

The proposal was turned down by the District of Hope, which now is no longer included within the discussion of this feasibility study. The Bus Saver proposal was approved in principle by the District of Kent and Village of Harrison Hot Springs subject to the assent of electors process required by the Regional District.

With respect to the District of Hope, any future transit feasibility studies will go through the request process outside of the Regional District. BC Transit staff and District of Hope staff have been in contact to discuss this issue. Because of the connections to Hope, service for Electoral Areas "A", "B" & "C" should be included within a study process centred on Hope. Information to the Regional District concerning these three Electoral Areas is therefore not included within the remainder of this report.

After discussion of the report within BC Transit, there was some discussion concerning the workability of the Bus Saver proposal. Concerns were raised primarily concerning:

- × the use of a traditionally handyDART type service by the general public
- × the use of a private carrier outside of the public tendering process
- × the possible lack of control of the use of the service (unlike solely handyDART eligible Taxi Saver, the use of which is monitored) and thus the lack of control over potential costs

The year or so following the completion of the report, these hesitations over the service proposal from both funding parties ultimately resulted in no action being taken toward implementation, although the proposal remained "on the books" with both the Regional District and BC Transit. Because of all these difficulties and the time lag involved, both parties agreed that a review of the study was in order, the result being this update.



3. LOCAL TRANSIT OBJECTIVES

As the municipal partner for the study has changed in the intervening time period between the original report and this update, a review of the local objectives for the prospective transit service is in order.

After review by the Executive, the Electoral Area Services Committee and applicable staff at the Fraser Valley Regional District, the following list of four objectives -- listed in order of priority as per the Regional District -- will supersede the objectives listed in the original report.

1. A daily subsidized scheduled commuter service between Popkum, Agassiz, Harrison, Kent & Chilliwack.
2. A paratransit system to service handyDART eligible citizens and seniors who are unable to use the above conventional transit system.
3. A call out system to service less populated areas on an as-needed basis.
4. A seasonal service from various locations to Harrison Hot Springs.

These objectives play an important role in that they form the tone and direction of the study and ultimately the service proposals and recommendations provided.

4. COMMUNITY BASED INFORMATION

4.1 POPULATION & DEMOGRAPHICS

The most basic indicators of potential transit ridership levels are characteristics of the population to be served -- total population, demographic breakdown and population distribution.

Based on information from Statistics Canada, Table 4.1 displays 1991 and 1996 Census population figures specifically for Kent and Harrison Hot Springs.

Table 4.1 Total Population

	1991	1996	% change	km ²	'96 pop/km ²
Kent	4,447	4,984	12.1	159.9	27.0
Harrison Hot Springs	674	924	37.1	6.0	109.0

Although the population has increased dramatically over the 5 year census period - the 1991 numbers which were used for the original report -- the absolute population changes are not significant to produce any substantive differences in transit service provision. In general, the population threshold within the Municipal Systems Program is 5,000 persons within a concentrated urban area for consideration of conventional service. The smallest community within the Municipal Systems Program with conventional service is Dawson Creek with a population served figure of 9,300 persons. Based solely on the nature of the "urban" population distribution within Kent and Harrison Hot Springs, which is segregated into the central areas of Harrison Hot Springs and Agassiz, suggests as with the original report, that a high level of conventional service provision is marginal at best and that the original evaluation of a moderate level of service is still valid.

For demographic analysis, refer to the original report.

4.2 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The development pattern of a community and local travel patterns provide information on the most effective design of a transit service. With most local trips being home-based, the main travel flows are generally between residential areas and activity centres. The scale and nature of each of these locations determines overall demand for travel.

Similar to the population information above, there have been some changes from the original report, but these changes would not affect the basis of the proposals or ultimate recommendations. Therefore, refer to the original report for details.

Taking into account both the population and community development information, the viability of a conventional type service is strengthened by the size and thus draw of "Chilliwack" in general as the primary transit ridership generator relative to the urban population base of Harrison Hot Springs or Agassiz which, as mentioned above, would not support such a service.

With this focus on travel to and from Chilliwack, other areas not within the study area that are currently not served by transit could also come under consideration. The one area in question is the community of Rosedale within the District of Chilliwack boundaries. From the 1996 census, the three enumeration areas making up Rosedale house 2,105 residents.

The one area that has changed which in particular alters the original recommendation is the nature of "The Bus" service in operation between Harrison Hot Springs, Agassiz and Chilliwack. In the interim, the system has been sold from Cheam Tours to Cheam Travel who has been operating the service much the same as the previous owner. In discussion with the CEO of the company as well as the Operations Manager, the ridership results on the system have not been up to their expectations and thus are not eager in a business sense to continue with the service, but will do so however in the interim until decisions on a public service are made as a result of this process.

The concerns of a public transit service negating the Cheam Travel licence with the Motor Carriers Commission to operate their other more profitable services under the contract does not seem to be founded. In a statement from the Motor Carrier Commission via correspondence from the Motor Carrier Department, the Commission will have the final say on the existing licencing agreement but that there is strong opinion that "something would be worked out so that Cheam would not lose their licence due to BC Transit's commencing service".

5. SERVICE PLAN

Because of the vehicle requirements for service and the moderate level of service warranted by population and community development, there will be one basic service plan provided in two parts: minibus service and Taxi Saver. This minibus plan will outline the vehicle requirement and the number of hours annually recommended for this vehicle. Although one detailed plan is provided for these hours, they can be modified or discussed further. Although the minibus proposal and Taxi Saver are somewhat independent, they are presented as a package as there is some overlap in the market served.

The cost figures provided are estimated operating costs for 1998 only based on similar systems in B.C. Actual costs cannot yet be determined until operations details are finalized. The figures do not include initial start-up costs which will be outlined later.

Ridership figures are estimates.

5.1 SERVICE PROPOSALS

5.1.1 Minibus Service

Annual Operating Cost: \$130,000

Annual Debt Service Cost (8 year amortization): \$15,000 to \$20,000 (depending upon vehicle type)

Annual Revenue Passengers: 11,000-20,000

The minibus service proposal would require the acquisition of one minibus. A vehicle with the capacity of 15 to 20 passenger seats with 2 wheelchair spaces would be the most appropriate as it matches the estimated demand based on the population size, and gives the greatest amount of flexibility for the service design. The latter comment refers to the mix possible of conventional and mobility disabled passengers as well as the imposition of a large vehicle in smaller urban areas. Depending upon the exact vehicle, the annual debt servicing will be approximately \$15,000 to \$20,000.

By the community information gathered, especially the large draw for travel into Chilliwack for all types of transit-related trips and by all market segments, it is proposed that an estimated 3,000 hours of revenue service be provided annually. This translates into daytime service, 8 to 10 hours per day, Monday through Saturday, excluding holidays. Although the population size is marginal for the level of service proposed, the provision of transit will provide greater opportunities over time and thus enhance ridership over the long term. The level of service should also attract some riders who may not have otherwise thought of using a service with less convenience.

The type of service proposed is a fixed route/fixed scheduled service with the possibility of deviations off this route within specified geographic areas to provide service for handyDART eligible clients. This type of service can truly be called a paratransit system in the sense that both conventional and handyDART eligible passengers can use the system and that there is some flexibility provided within the system. However the service can also be

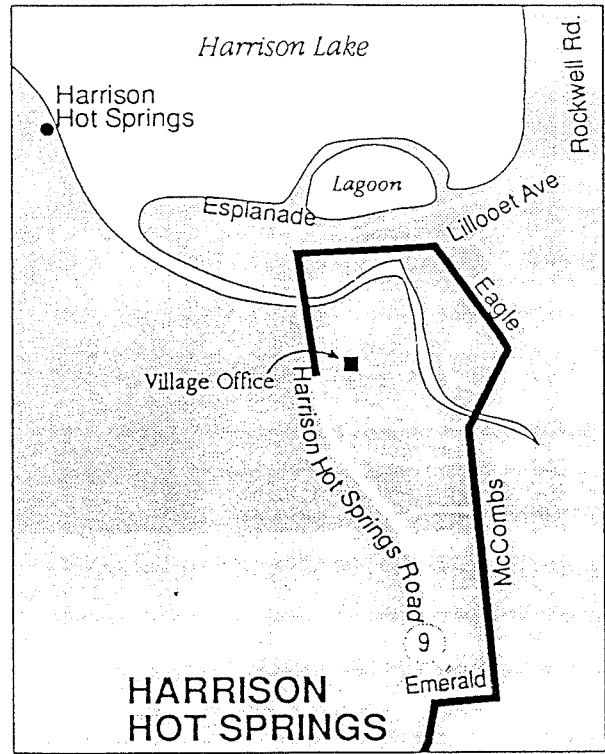
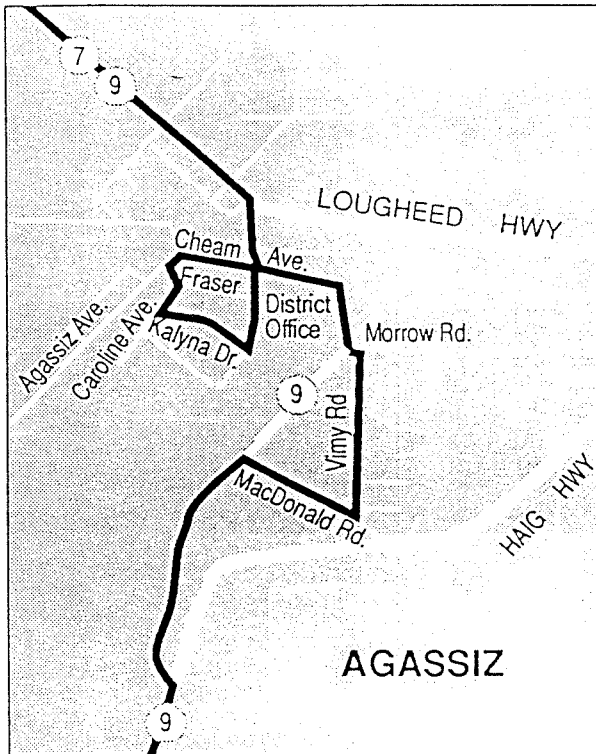
termed an accessible conventional system. This classification is important for costing purposes (refer to section 5.2).

The proposed routing is the same as the Harrison Hot Springs-Agassiz-Chilliwack minibus routing presented in the original report. The route would also provide service to the residential areas of Popkum and Rosedale. The proposed routing is:

- ☆ from Harrison Hot Springs Road and Walnut via Harrison Hot Springs Road, Lillooet, Eagle, McCombs, Emerald, Harrison Hot Springs Road, Lougheed Highway to Agassiz
- ☆ from Agassiz via Lougheed Highway, Evergreen, Cheam, Agassiz, Fraser, Caroline, Kalyna, Evergreen, Cheam, Agassiz-Rosedale, Morrow, Vimy, McDonald, Agassiz-Rosedale, Highway 9 to Popkum and Rosedale
- ☆ from Rosedale via Yale Road East to Downtown Chilliwack
- ☆ the outbound route from Chilliwack to Hope is reverse of the inbound

With this routing, service will terminate Downtown at the existing transit exchange with transfers available on the existing Chilliwack Transit System, upon approval by the District of Chilliwack. The routing through Agassiz and Harrison Hot Springs is presented in Map 1.

Map 1. Proposed Routing Through Agassiz and Harrison Hot Springs



Along the route, bus stops should be located only within the built-up areas of Harrison Hot Springs, Agassiz, Popkum and Rosedale. Actual bus stop locations can be decided upon at a later date in consultation between BC Transit and municipal staff. In other areas along the route, "flag" or "hail" stops would be more efficient, with the actual stop location at the discretion of the driver based on safety.

The viability of this service proposal is dependent upon the approval of the District of Kent and to a lesser extent the Village of Harrison Hot Springs. Minor service adjustments can be made if Electoral Area "D" and/or Chilliwack do not approve the service. If it is not approved by Electoral Area "D", then stopping in Popkum can be eliminated. If it is not approved by Chilliwack, the service through Rosedale can be eliminated with the service into the Chilliwack core straight from Highway 9 onto the Trans Canada Highway as opposed to Yale Road.

The service provided in the core area of Chilliwack is proposed to travel along Yale Road to downtown, at which point transfers with the Chilliwack Transit System are proposed for travel to destinations other than Downtown. Straight transfers are proposed onto the Chilliwack service, with fare differentials from the Chilliwack service paid upon boarding the Agassiz-Harrison service. Transferring between the two systems is dependent upon approval by the District of Chilliwack and the operating company(s) in question i.e. that operating the Chilliwack Transit System and that operating the proposed service.

A one-way trip is approximately 31.2km and would take just under an hour (approximately 50 minutes) to complete the trip. A five minute extension of this trip time would provide the schedule flexibility required for the small number of route deviations expected. A reasonable start time for weekday commuter service, to get riders to Downtown Chilliwack for 8:00, would be 7:00 from Harrison Hot Springs Road and Walnut. A last afternoon outbound trip leaving Downtown Chilliwack at 17:05 would arrive in Harrison Hot Springs at 18:00. This would provide a weekday commuter option for those people working in Downtown Chilliwack between the hours of 8:00 and 17:00.

With a round trip travel time of just under two hours, this would also provide time for two additional round trips during the day. This entire package would therefore provide service to commuters and well as midday travellers (shoppers, etc.).

On Saturdays, the proposed scheduling is begin service later in the morning with the first trip leaving Harrison Hot Springs at 8:30 for a Downtown Chilliwack arrival time of approximately 9:30. This timing is proposed as the Saturday commuter market is not as strong and thus beginning service later in the morning will provide a greater number of options for general travel on Saturdays.

The proposed schedule is listed in Appendix A. The times allow for connections specifically with the #7 Sardis in Chilliwack to access most transit generators i.e. the the malls, UCFV, the Greyhound Bus terminal.

This level of service would also meet the objective of summer seasonal service to Harrison Hot Springs, which basically is counter travel of the regular service. This schedule on

Sundays and Holidays over the summer period can be included to accommodate this objective.

Regarding ridership, there is a range of estimated ridership for the service proposal from 11,000 annual passengers at the low end to 20,000 at the high end. The figures are dependent upon the actual jurisdictions in which service is to be provided as well as the fare levels which will be discussed in a later section.

Among the participating local jurisdictions, the method of apportionment of the local share of costs is the responsibility of the Regional District. Most multi-jurisdictional services within the Municipal Systems Program are apportioned by hours of service provided in each jurisdiction. Population served is another method. The actual method of apportionment can be decided among the participating jurisdictions with the understanding among the jurisdictions that this method be applied to future years and to any future changes of service.

5.1.2 Taxi Saver

Annual Operating Cost: \$15,000

Annual Revenue Passengers: 1,500

Although the handyDART eligible market is covered within the minibus service option, there are still those handyDART eligible clients who would not be able to access the service. For this market, a modest level of Taxi Saver service is proposed for local service specifically within Harrison Hot Springs, Kent and Electoral Area "D".

Taxi Saver, a program within the package of BC Transit custom services, is a handyDART eligible rider subsidy to use private taxi services at 50% of the trip value. The basic premise is that the rider pay 50% of the trip value with the service funding partners, in this case the participating municipalities and BC Transit, picking up the remaining 50%. The service is operated through the sale of coupons by the municipal partner to eligible users of the service at 50% the face value, the rider him or herself making the necessary arrangements with the taxi company for the trip(s) and the taxi company getting reimbursed for the face value of the coupons by the municipal partner. The service is a non-revenue generating one in the sense that the funding partners accrue no revenue.

The negative of this service for the market is that it can be cost prohibitive for longer distance trips and thus would only be eligible for travel within those participating municipalities. It works well for shorter local trips. The major benefit is that the cost is based on use of the service, and specifically for the level of demand estimated, more cost efficient than a traditional handyDART service.

Currently there is no wheelchair accessible taxi in service in the Agassiz-Harrison area which would initially limit the service to non-wheelchair passengers. With this subsidized service for the entire handyDART clientele including wheelchair passengers, this may encourage the taxi companies to acquire such a vehicle.

This proposal is based on a total maximum funding level of \$15,000 worth of taxi trips, half of this paid for by the Taxi Saver rider and half cost shared by the funding partners. If approved by the funding partners, any amount above this will have to be approved both locally and by the Provincial Treasury Board.

As with the van service, apportionment of the municipal share of costs of this service is the responsibility of the local jurisdictions involved with the method of apportionment to apply to the service in future year and with and adjustments in the size of the Taxi Saver program.

5.2 LOCAL COST IMPLICATIONS

The ultimate local share of costs are dependent upon many factors yet to be discussed.

5.2.1 Cost Sharing

Cost sharing of a transit system is split between BC Transit and the municipality with all revenue (fares, bus advertising, custom transit donations) going toward the municipal share. Table 5.1 outlines

Table 5.1 Municipal Share of Costs

Year	Conventional	Custom
1	47.5%	27.5%
2	47.5%	27.5%
3	51.0%	31.0%
4+	53.31%	33.31%

the municipal share of costs for various years of a transit system for both conventional and custom transit. Depending upon the percentage of custom transit registrants carried on a paratransit system, the municipal share of paratransit service falls between the conventional-custom range. For a more detailed description of what falls under conventional, custom and paratransit service, refer to the glossary of terms in Appendix B.

The higher BC Transit share in earlier years reflects the growth of transit over the initial few years to system maturity by year 4. Through these initial years, additional revenue accrued through greater ridership should offset the increase in the municipal share.

Although the classification of the minibus proposal can affect cost sharing, it is proposed that it be classified under the conventional service as all accessible conventional services are. Although this increases the local share of costs as the Provincial subsidy decreases, the benefit of the conventional classification is more in a service design aspect to be discussed under section 5.2.3.

5.2.2 Fare Structure

Transit fares in B.C. are not structured to meet traditional business objectives of revenue or profit. Instead, the objective is to provide a combination of adequate government subsidies and farebox revenue to meet social, economic and municipal objectives.

For the minibus service, four fare options are presented in Table 5.2. The options range from the fares existing in Chilliwack to the existing fares on the private service "the Bus". two options are for flat fares throughout the entire Regional District (including Chilliwack) or zone fares based on travelling distance.

Although not listed, each proposal would also include pre-paid fare options such as books of 20 tickets and monthly passes, the tickets priced at slightly discounted rates off the face value and the month pass at about 20 round trips per month.

As discussed previously, transfer privileges between the service and the Chilliwack Transit System will be subject to successful negotiations between and approvals from those parties involved, specifically the District of Chilliwack and the operating company(s) involved.

Above those fare categories listed in Table 5.2, children under 5 years ride free on conventional transit when accompanied by an adult.

Table 5.2 Proposed Fare Structure

OPTION 1	1 ZONE*	2 ZONES*
Adults	\$1.00	\$1.50
Concession	\$0.75	\$1.00
OPTION 2	1 ZONE*	2 ZONES*
Adults	\$1.50	\$2.00
Concession	\$1.00	\$1.50
OPTION 3	1 ZONE*	2 ZONES*
Adults	\$2.50	\$3.00
Concession	\$1.50	\$2.00
OPTION 4	1 ZONE*	2 ZONES*
Adults	\$3.00	\$4.00
Concession	\$2.00	\$2.50

* Zone A: Chilliwack
 Zone B: Harrison Hot Springs, Kent, Electoral Area "D"
 Sample Option 2 fares policy:
 within Kent: one zone fare
 Kent ⇔ Chilliwack: two zone fare
 Harrison ⇔ Kent: one zone fare
 Harrison ⇔ Chilliwack: two zone fare

Although fares are generally inelastic within an "acceptable price range", fares in this case may affect ridership levels. Comments on non-use of the current "The Bus" service has included fare levels that are too high for some. The projected affect of the four fare options on ridership are outlined in section 5.3.

5.2.3 Operations

The actual operational details of the minibus service can have an affect on the cost of the service proposal.

There are two options. The first option is to treat this proposal as a new system. In doing so, the search for a company to operate the system would be conducted through a request for proposals (RFP) public tendering process. The selection process is based on primarily on the management proposal and total cost. For a new system, one of the largest cost uncertainties at this time is driver wage & benefit costs. The bid processes are conducted on a 5 year cycle, with the initial phase requesting fixed information for the first 2 years. There is then a additional 2 year extension option followed by a 1 year extension option, both extensions based on approval by both funding partners. Subsequent RFP processes do not have as much uncertainty due to incumbent history as well as controls over driver wages independent of the operating company.

The second option is to have this service as an extension of the existing Chilliwack Transit Service Area. In doing this, the operations would fall under the existing Chilliwack

operations. As the Annual Operating Agreement is with the District of Chilliwack, this extension of service would most easily be supported by the Regional District being a "sub-partner" of the District.

The RFP route is the recommended option. The benefits of this are:

- ✓ competition among a wide range of qualified local companies to provide the service which may lead to lower costs
- ✓ direct control of the service, operating company selection and fares by the municipalities involved

There are some negatives:

- × greater uncertainty in initial costs
 - × the possibility of transferring privileges with the Chilliwack Transit System are somewhat hindered and "dual operations" within Chilliwack can be confusing to customers
- With the uncertainty in costs, the RFP process does allow the local municipalities involved to control costs by dismissing any or all proposals deemed too high.

5.3 SYSTEM PERFORMANCE

Table 5.3 displays the financial performance and productivity of the minibus and Taxi Saver proposals.

Based on comments previously received from the District of Chilliwack, the minibus proposal information provided in the table reflects service provided in Harrison Hot Springs and Kent, and excludes service through Rosedale; service to Popkum will result in little difference in costs or revenues. Costs for the minibus service are built up from averages for similar systems in the province and is dependent upon the RFP submissions. Debt servicing costs for the minibus is listed at the \$20,000 figure. The minibus proposal is listed with each of the four fare levels and expected ridership/revenue for each fare level.

Although the local share of costs is relatively high specifically for the minibus service, this is estimated for the first year of service with a relatively rich level of service for the population size and density. However this will lay a strong foundation for the future in term of public transit usage in the future within this area.

With the cost information as a basis, the local jurisdictions can then better make judgements on acceptable fare levels for the service. As all revenues go to offset the local share of costs, decisions on fare levels will be left to the municipalities involved.

ANNUAL OPERATING AGREEMENT

Table 5.3 INFORMATION AND PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

Agassiz-Harrison	Van Service Fare Option 1	Van Service Fare Option 2	Van Service Fare Option 3	Van Service Fare Option 4	Taxi Saver
BUDGET SUMMARY					
Total Costs	\$147,472	\$147,472	\$147,472	\$147,472	\$8,155
Total Revenue	\$25,000	\$31,500	\$40,000	\$47,250	\$0
BCT Share of Costs*	\$77,423	\$77,423	\$77,423	\$77,423	\$4,282
Net Municipal Share	\$42,750	\$36,250	\$27,750	\$20,500	\$3,724
PERFORMANCE SUMMARY					
Level of Service					
Population Served	4,500	4,500	4,500	4,500	0
Registered Users	0	0	0	0	100
Number of Buses in Service	1	1	1	1	0
Revenue Hours of Service	3,020.00	3,020.00	3,020.00	3,020.00	0.00
Effectiveness					
Annual Revenue Passengers	20,000	18,000	16,000	14,000	2,143
<i>Conventional</i>	<i>20,000</i>	<i>18,000</i>	<i>16,000</i>	<i>14,000</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Maximum Taxi Saver Budgetea</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2,143</i>
Total Rides per Capita	4.4	4.0	3.6	3.1	0.0
Custom Rides per Registered Us	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	21.4
Passengers per Revenue Hour	6.6	6.0	5.3	4.6	0.0
Total Cost per Total Passenger	\$7.37	\$8.19	\$9.22	\$10.53	\$3.81
Cost per Van Passenger	\$7.37	\$8.19	\$9.22	\$10.53	\$0.00
Taxi Cost per Passenger	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3.50
Cost Recovery (%)	17.0%	21.4%	27.1%	32.0%	0.0%
Efficiency					
Cost per Revenue Hour	\$48.83	\$48.83	\$48.83	\$48.83	\$0.00

* For the first year of service, the BCT share of costs is 52.5% for the van service and 72.5% for the Taxi Saver

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 SERVICE RECOMMENDATIONS

Subject to funding and successful negotiations, it is recommended that:

- 1. minibus service as outlined in section 5.1.1*
- 2. Taxi Saver service in the amount of \$15,000 annually, as outline in section 5.1.2 be approved in principle.*

This set of recommendations is the package that best represents the direction of the Regional District for this area as outlined within the local transit objectives. This set of recommendations is focused on the four objectives in terms of the priority outlined in section 3 with the exception of the third objective of service to less populated areas..

As these issues fall under the responsibility of the local municipalities as they are those that directly affect local costs per each municipality in question, the issue of cash fare levels, fare policies (such as zones) and methodology behind the municipal apportionment of costs will be left for the municipalities involved to decide. Information on the affect of fares on local costs and the local costs to be apportioned among the participating municipalities are summarized in Table 5.3 on page 15. Suggestions on methods for apportionment can be found in the last paragraph of section 5.1.1.

6.2 PROCESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Subject to the approval of the service recommendation in principle, it is recommended that the participating municipalities approve that BC Transit and municipal staff proceed with the RFP process for operating company selection for the service.

The conduct of the RFP process allows the service implementation process to proceed without delay but still allows the municipalities to approve the service based on the submissions received in the RFP process.

7. IMPLEMENTATION & ON-GOING RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1 IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

Following Municipal review and approval of a Transit Service Plan, the implementation phase begins. The responsibilities between the local municipality(s), BC Transit and the operating company are outlined in Appendix C. This process involves the following steps.

1. A public information workshop may be held prior to finalizing operational details. The workshop would consist of a public display set up in a high traffic area. BC Transit staff would be available to answer any questions and suggested adjustments to the plan would be brought forward for discussion.
2. Transit Service Agreement (TSA) -- The TSA defines the service area and describes the cost-sharing for the service. The designation of the Transit Service Area requires a resolution by Regional Board/Councils. The BC Transit Act requires the BC Transit Board to designate the Transit Service Area as defined by Regional Board/Council resolution.
3. Annual Operating Agreement (AOA) -- An AOA between the Operator, the Municipality(s) and BC Transit will then be signed as a basis for operating the transit service. The AOA includes service specifications, schedules, fare structure, budget and other information pertaining to the operation of the service. The AOA allows for the signing of a Vehicle Lease Agreement between BC Transit and the Operator. AOAs are negotiated and approved on an annual basis, the period of the term from April 1 to March 31.
4. Facilities -- Bus stops and shelters will be required. Field work to determine bus stop locations will be done following approval of the service plan. Locations will be determined by BC Transit and Municipal staff. Actual installation of the stops should begin approximately four weeks prior to implementation of service. Bus stop installation costs are a municipal responsibility. Costs for bus stops are approximately \$10 for each strip sign and \$15 for each flag sign, the costs of which are cost sharable under the AOA. Installation and its costs are variable depending upon the municipality.

Shelters -- Shelters and benches are the responsibility of the municipality. The benefits of these passenger conveniences are many. A modern, clean well lit transit shelter at key bus stop locations will greatly enhance the public perception of the system. The convenience, accessibility and cleanliness encountered at bus stops will create a lasting impression of the overall system long before the bus arrives. The municipalities involved should investigate the provision of shelters and benches through social service agencies.

5. Marketing -- A marketing program will be undertaken during the final weeks leading to service start-up. For the minibus service, the schedule for the service will be produced by BC Transit staff. A press release, newspaper and radio ads are also a part of the marketing program. To celebrate opening day a 25c "Seat Sale" is proposed. Details of

this event and other opening day activities will be outlined in the press release and newspaper ads. On-going marketing programs will be developed as the system evolves perhaps in conjunction with service promotions in Chilliwack.

Based on approvals required by the funding parties, particularly Provincial funding scheduling, it is anticipated that service would begin in the late winter/early spring of 1999.

7.2 MONITORING PROGRAM

One of BC Transit's responsibilities as set out in the Annual Operating Agreement is to monitor and evaluate system performance and productivity. The monitoring program includes:

- ☆ regular inspections of vehicles and maintenance procedures,
- ☆ detailed ridership reports submitted by the operator on a monthly basis,
- ☆ a detailed two week passenger count to analyze system productivity by time and day of the week,
- ☆ an on-board passenger survey to determine where passengers are going, who they are and why they are using transit,
- ☆ a service audit carried out without the knowledge of the operator to evaluate service reliability and quality and
- ☆ frequent discussions with operating and municipal staff to determine operating concerns and suggestions to improve routes and schedules.

7.3 SERVICE REVIEW

Following implementation, service reviews will be conducted on a regular basis. These reviews are very important to determine any service level adjustments required. The service review contains a complete analysis of the system (based on the monitoring program) including ridership, passenger profile, survey results, concerns and suggestions raised in the first months of operation. The review includes an examination of community growth and recommendations for service adjustments and areas of possible future expansion.

In summary, service reviews are only a part of an on-going partnership work approach that BC Transit follows in our relationships with all communities in the Municipal Systems Program.

APPENDIX A. PROPOSED SCHEDULE OF MINIBUS SERVICE

Weekdays (excluding holidays)

Lv. Harrison Village Office	Lv. Kent District Office	Lv. Rosedale	Ar. Downtown Chilliwack
07:00	07:15	07:35	07:55
09:00	09:15	09:35	09:55
14:00	14:15	14:35	14:55
16:00	16:15	16:35	16:55
Lv. Downtown Chilliwack	Lv. Rosedale	Lv. Kent District Office	Ar. Harrison Village Office
08:00	08:20	08:40	08:55
10:00	10:20	10:40	10:55
15:00	15:20	15:40	15:55
17:00	17:20	17:40	17:55

Saturdays and "Summer Sundays/Holidays"

Lv. Harrison Village Office	Lv. Kent District Office	Lv. Rosedale	Ar. Downtown Chilliwack
08:30	08:45	09:05	09:25
10:30	10:45	11:05	11:25
14:00	14:15	14:35	14:55
16:00	16:15	16:35	16:55
Lv. Downtown Chilliwack	Lv. Rosedale	Lv. Kent District Office	Ar. Harrison Village Office
09:30	09:50	10:05	10:25
11:30	11:50	12:05	12:25
15:00	15:20	15:40	15:55
17:00	17:20	17:40	17:55

* Sundays and holidays from July 1st to Labour Day

APPENDIX B. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

<i>Accessible Transit</i>	Transit service utilizing vehicles that can be accessed by persons in a wheelchair.
<i>Annual Operating Agreement (AOA)</i>	A three party agreement between the Municipality, BC Transit and the Operating Company which allows for the delivery of the transit service, defines total costs and defines the responsibilities of each party.
<i>Attendant</i>	A person who must assist a registered handyDART client to make a handyDART trip. The origin and destination must be the same as the registered client. Attendants ride free of charge. Also see Escort.
<i>Captive Rider</i>	A transit rider who does not have immediate access to private transportation or due to some other circumstances must use public transit.
<i>Choice Rider</i>	A transit passenger who has a variety of modes of travel available for a particular trip and has selected public transit.
<i>Conventional Transit</i>	A transit service using regularly scheduled, "fixed route" vehicles (operating according to published route maps and timetables).
<i>Cost Recovery</i>	A measure of the financial performance of the transit system usually expressed in terms of total operating revenue/total operating expenses.
<i>Custom Transit</i>	A door-to-door transit service for those persons whose physical disability prevents them from being able to use a conventional transit service.
<i>Deadhead</i>	Vehicle travel on non-revenue service (e.g. to /from the garage during the start of service or the end of service).
<i>Demand Responsive Transit</i>	A class of transit service characterized by flexible routing and/or scheduling of vehicles in response to demand (telephone or hail).
<i>Escort</i>	A person not eligible for handyDART who accompanies a registered client on a handyDART trip, space providing. The origin and destination must be the same as the registered client. Escorts pay the regular fare. Also see Attendant.
<i>handyDART</i>	The BC Transit custom transit program (<i>handy Dial-A-Ride</i> Transportation).

<i>Non-Productive Time</i>	Hours for which operator wages are paid for non-revenue service (e.g. deadheading, etc.).
<i>Paratransit</i>	A general name for a class of transportation service offering a more flexible and personalized service than conventional fixed-route transit but not including private, exclusive use systems such as private car, exclusive ride taxi or chartered bus. Includes systems such as a dial-a-bus, shared-ride taxi and subscription bus services.
<i>Population Served</i>	That portion of the population within the transit service area that is within walking distance to a transit route. The general measure of walking distance is either 300 or 400 metres.
<i>Revenue Hours</i>	The total number of scheduled hours that a transit vehicle is being operated and is available for passenger service.
<i>Revenue Kilometres</i>	The movement of a transit vehicle a distance of one kilometre in a regular passenger service.
<i>Revenue Passenger</i>	A transit rider associated with one fare payment to use the transit service.
<i>Taxi Saver</i>	The BC Transit taxi scrip program.
<i>Taxi Scrip</i>	A municipally and provincially subsidized program for custom transit clients to ride on taxis.
<i>Taxi Supplement</i>	A service where a privately owned taxi is dispatched through the transit operator for custom transit service.
<i>Transit Service Agreement (TSA)</i>	A three year agreement between BC Transit and the Municipality which sets the sharing of responsibilities for operation of a conventional, custom and/or paratransit service.
<i>Transit Service Area</i>	Established under the terms of the TSA and designated by the BC Transit Board as an area in which the transit service operates and which the Municipality can levy a property tax to cover their portion of the operating deficit.

APPENDIX C. ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ON-GOING OPERATION OF TRANSIT IN THE MUNICIPAL SYSTEMS PROGRAM

Function	Activity	Municipality	BC Transit	Operator
1. Management	A) Management and Supervision of system operation and payroll, including records and reports of operation B) Provision of trained competent, uniformed and licensed drivers C) Provision of Passenger and Public Relations for Staff D) Fare Collection and Security E) Farebox Collection, Security, and Reporting F) Accounting Controls, Reports, Analysis G) Audits, Ridership Counts, & Performance Trends	•	•	• • • •
2. Operations	A) Physical Inspection of the On-street Facilities B) Compliance with Service Specification C) Conduct performance checks D) Maintain a transit telephone number E) Maintain a log of Complaints, Suggestions, and Recommendations F) Maintain a Lost and Found G) Install Bus Stop Signs and make Bus Stop Improvements H) Notify Operating Company of street closures or traffic disruptions I) Install and Replace Bus Advertising material J) Make Necessary Traffic Control By-laws	• • •	•	• • • • • • •
3. Vehicles	A) Provide Vehicles, Destination Blinds, and Fareboxes B) Maintain and Service Vehicles C) Conduct Maintenance Inspections D) Insure Vehicles		• • •	• • •
4. Finances	A) Fix and Amend Fares B) Negotiate Annual Operating Agreement Budget C) Approve Annual Operating Agreement Budget	• • •	• • •	• • •
5. Marketing	A) Prepare, Provide, and Control Merchandising Plans B) Provide Bus Stop signs, public timetables, timetable posters C) Maintain a public profile and seek new riders	• •	• •	
6. Service Planning	A) Prepare plans with Routes, Schedule, Stops and Budget B) Review, Amend, or Approve plans C) Amend the Annual Operating Agreement D) Implement Service	• •	• • •	• •
7. Comprehensive Planning	A) Set City Transit Objectives B) Prepare Service Plans, vehicle and capital improvement plans, Merchandising plans, and budget forecasting and analysis C) Approve Plan	• •	• •	