

**PORT ALBERNI CONVENTIONAL SYSTEM
AND ALBERNI-CLAYOQUOT CUSTOM TRANSIT SYSTEM**

TRANSIT STRATEGY

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1. INTRODUCTION

Public transit is delivered in BC, outside Greater Vancouver, under a partnership between BC Transit, local government and, in most cases, a private sector operating company. The operating authority, assignment of responsibilities between the parties and cost-sharing between BC Transit and local government partners are established under the British Columbia Transit Act and Regulation. Within the City of Port Alberni, the conventional transit system is operated by Western Bus Lines Ltd. while the handyDART system is operated by P.N.A. Transit Ltd.

This Transit Strategy is developed to support the City of Port Alberni's plans for growth and development over the next five years. The Strategy outlines the key objectives for the delivery of transit services within the Port Alberni area and examines the current and future markets of transit customers. The review of existing transit services, including an assessment of key performance indicators, provides the necessary system level information in which to identify service improvements to occur over the next three to five years. Key support initiatives that are necessary to enhance the effectiveness of transit within Port Alberni are also included in the strategy.

2. OBJECTIVES

The primary goal of the Port Alberni Transit Strategy is to provide transportation alternatives to key customer markets and increase overall mobility within the community. In this regard, the primary objectives of the Transit Strategy are briefly summarized as follows:

- **Provide service to all major activity centres and key residential areas in Port Alberni.** In this regard, transit service will focus primarily on the established areas of the community, with services directed toward connecting residential, mixed-use and other key trip generators within Port Alberni. Shopping areas are the largest market for transit in Port Alberni and continuing to service these needs will be a priority.
- **Focus on the service needs of commuters for school and work.** While a relatively low proportion of transit users, there are opportunities to attract school students

and commuters. Particular emphasis will be put on continuing service in the area of existing secondary schools and North Island College.

- **Provide services to support mobility for seniors, and persons with disabilities.** Approximately 15% of the population in Port Alberni is 65 or older, with the number of people set to become seniors in the next 5 years being approximately 5.6% of the population. Continued operation of the regional handyDart service will help to serve this population.
- **Integrate transit considerations with land use planning decisions.** The City's Official Community Plan outlines the expectations for growth and development. The Transit Strategy will support the growth patterns of the community and should be integrated with future land use decisions ranging from area structure plans through to subdivision applications. This could also be used to influence the relationship between transit and where key land uses are located such as medical facilities and shopping. Community planning exercises could also define the densities required to support better transit service as communities develop.
- **Define supporting strategies needed to encourage greater transit ridership among key customer markets.** In order to make transit more attractive, supporting strategies that encourage and facilitate access to transit will be examined. These initiatives may range from making transit facilities more accessible through to support programs provided directly to target transit customers.
- **Make efficient use of transit resources using key performance indicators to maximize customer service and community benefits.** Monitoring key performance indicators and making comparisons with similar transit systems will be used to identify guide the development of improvement opportunities with the available transit resources.

3. CURRENT & FUTURE MARKETS

The assessment of current and future transit customer markets is a key step in the development of a transit plan. Key factors

include population characteristics, the profile of transit riders as well as other key observations about the community.

The Port Alberni conventional transit service area is expected to experience population decreases over the next 25 years. Currently, there are approximately 18,700 people in the Port Alberni service area with this expected to decrease to 17,000 by 2031.

The Alberni-Clayoquot handyDart service area has a population of approximately 25,800, with this expected to decrease to 23,500 by 2031.

The area has approximately 15% of its population that is 65 years or older. This is expected to grow as the population ages. Approximately 17% of the population is less than 15 years old.

4. EXISTING SERVICES & PERFORMANCE

BC Transit monitors key performance indicators related to transit systems on a quarterly basis and sets targets annually. These indicators provide BC Transit with the data required to assess how well the system is performing and provides guidance for future investment.

The Port Alberni transit service is comprised of four routes. These routes serve the hospital, secondary schools, North Island College and the major shopping areas. Table 1 summarizes transit service in Port Alberni, while Figure 1 illustrates the transit routes.

Table 1 – Transit Frequency

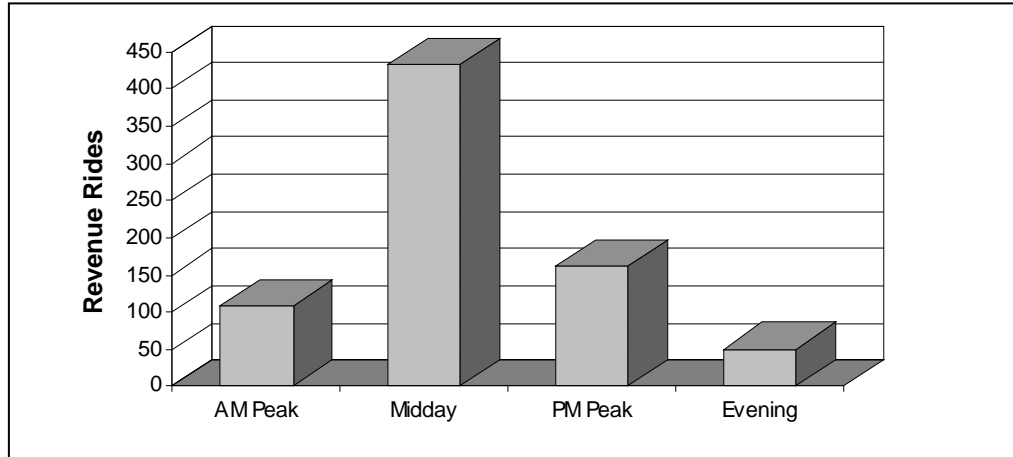
Route	Service Day	AM Peak (min)	Midday (min)	PM Peak (min)	Evening (min)
1 – Ian Ave	6:30 – 17:30	60	60	60	-
2 – Gertrude	7:00 – 17:00	60	60	60	-
3 – River Road	7:45 – 16:40	60	60	60	-
4 – Evening Special	18:20 – 21:20	-	-	-	60

Figure 1 – Port Alberni Transit Map



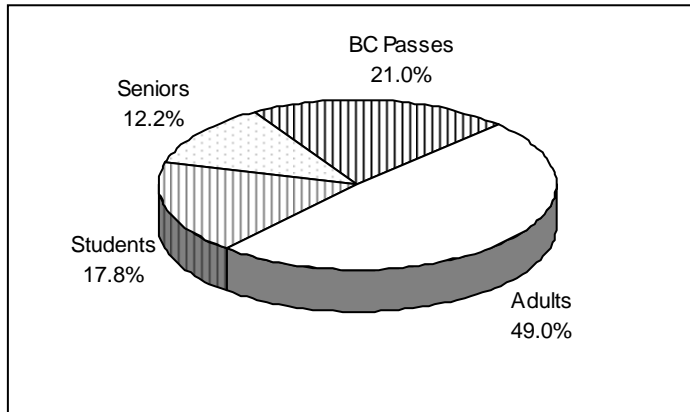
Based on two week counts in October 2007, the Port Alberni transit system handles approximately 754 revenue passengers per day. Ridership is highest during the midday hours. Figure 2 summarizes this information.

Figure 2 – Weekday Ridership



The largest passenger group in Port Alberni are adults, comprising 49% of overall ridership followed by those with BC Bus Passes and students. Figure 3 summarizes the weekday revenue ridership by passenger group.

Figure 3 – Weekday Revenue Ridership by Passenger Group



Relative to other communities of similar type service, Port Alberni has a fairly effective transit service when considering service levels and key performance indicators. In comparison to communities with a similar type of transit service, Port Alberni's is one of the cheapest to operate based on cost per hour as well as cost per passenger. In 2006/07, the system handled almost 240,000 passengers and had a total cost of approximately \$1 million. Table 2 summarizes these performance indicators for Port Alberni conventional service as well as for the custom/paratransit service.

Table 2 – Key Performance Indicators

INDICATOR	CONVENTIONAL SERVICE PERFORMANCE	CUSTOM/ PARATRANSIT SERVICE
Financial Summary		
Total Cost	\$1,013,000	\$270,800
Total Revenue	\$262,700	\$32,300
BC Transit Share	\$422,800	\$170,400
Net Municipal Share	\$310,600	\$63,400
Level of Service		
Population Served	18,700	26,400
Vehicles in Service	3	3
Revenue Hours	11,686	5,268
Performance Summary		
Annual Passengers	239,423	20,796
Passengers/hour service	21.2	3.9
Total Cost per Passenger	\$4.23	\$13.02
Cost Recovery	25.9%	11.9%
Cost per Hour Service	\$80.31	\$48.03

5. IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES

This section outlines improvements to the Port Alberni transit system over the next 3 – 5 years. These improvements will evolve with community planning as well as changes in community development. They are also subject to local and provincial budget approvals and are conditional on local and provincial resources.

In Port Alberni, there is the potential to extend service to Sundays and to restructure the system itself.

The Alberni-Clayoquot system could have basic service expansion. This would include an extra vehicle to provide additional hours per day. For example paratransit service could be expanded to Sprout Lake.

Taxi Saver programs could also be implemented to support handyDart service.

6. SUPPORTING STRATEGIES

In addition to providing transit services directed toward the target customer markets, supporting strategies can be used to encourage and accommodate greater ridership and improve transit service performance. Improvement strategies could include, in general, the following:

- Fare strategies that may be directed toward expanding existing target markets
- TDM measures that support the integration of transit with attractive bicycle and pedestrian facilities in terms of creating enhanced access
- On-street facilities at high demand locations to enhance the quality of waiting areas
- Marketing strategies to identify and target key transit markets, including the provision of accessible transit information such as riders' guides, information signage, and the website.

Finding incentives to get taxi companies to acquire accessible vehicles would support the handyDart service. This would require working with BC Taxi to undertake a strategy to see ways of making subsidies to assist to provide accessible vehicles.

The City of Port Alberni is also seeking funding for the installation of new bus shelters.

7. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City of Port Alberni and the Regional District of Alberni-Clayoquot and BC Transit approve this transit strategy as a guide for transit planning and delivery in Port Alberni and Alberni-Clayoquot region.