

SMITHERS PARATRANSIT 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. The Smithers transit system is operated by the Smithers Community Services Association.

This Transit Strategy is developed to support the Town of Smithers'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 Smithers 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 the Town of Smithers are also included in the strategy.

2. OBJECTIVES

The primary goal of the Town of Smithers 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 Smithers, as well as connections to the Village of Telkwa.** 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 the Town of Smithers and between Smithers and Telkwa.
- **Focus on the service needs of commuters for school and work.** Existing and new transit services will continue to focus on the primary markets – schools, and senior's facilities. Particular emphasis will be put on

attracting youth to use transit and build ridership in this regard by continuing service

- **Provide services to support mobility for seniors, and persons with disabilities.** Approximately 8% of the population in Smithers is 65 or older, with the number of people set to become seniors in the next 5 years being approximately 4% of the population.
- **Integrate transit considerations with land use planning decisions.** The City's Official Community Plan outlines the expectations for growth and development. Currently the City is in the process of updating their OCP. 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. 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 Smithers area is expected to have significant population growth over the next 25 years, particularly as Smithers Mountain Resort is developed. Currently, there are

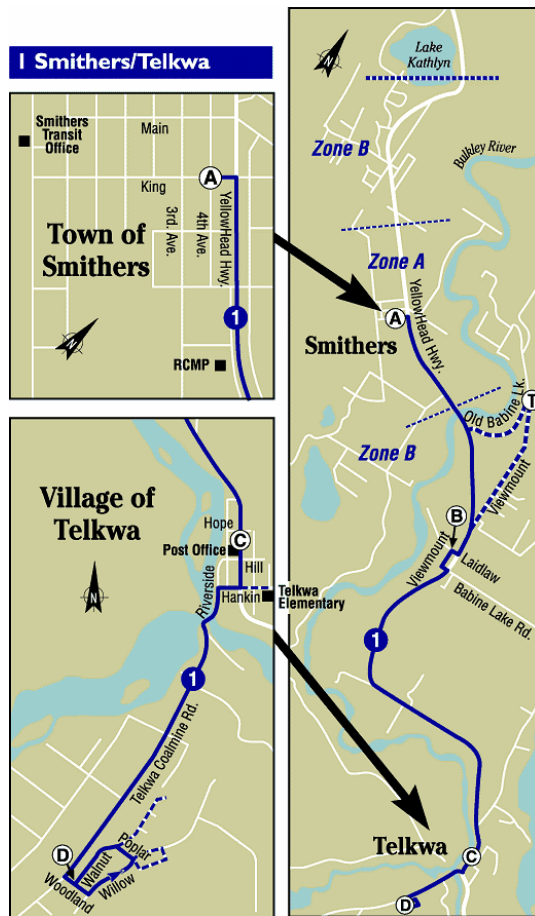
approximately 12,400 people in the Smithers service area with this expected to increase to 14,200 by 2031.

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 Smithers paratransit service is comprised of one fixed router with custom handyDART to door service provided between the runs. The route operates between Smithers and Telkwa five times a day from Monday to Friday. There is flexibility in the routing for route deviation of up to 500 m. The route emanate from downtown Smithers. Figure 1 illustrates the route.

Figure 1 – Smithers Transit Map



The Smithers Paratransit System carried just under 14,000 passengers in 2006/07. Table 1 shows the ridership by passenger and service type. HandyDART rides accounted for about one third of the total ridership, with ambulatory passengers accounting for the majority of these rides. Conventional rides on the fixed route service accounted for more than half of total ridership.

Table 1: Ridership by Passenger & Service Type

handyDART Rides	
Ambulatory	2,801
Wheelchair	1,806
Paratransit Rides	1,795
Conventional Rides	7,331
Total Rides	13,733

Relative to other communities of similar type service, Smithers has a fairly effective transit service when considering service levels and key performance indicators (KPI). In 2006/07, the system handled 13,733 passengers and had a total cost of approximately \$99,300. Table 2 summarizes the KPI for Smithers.

Table 2 – Key Performance Indicators, 2006/07

INDICATOR	PERFORMANCE
Financial Summary	
Total Cost	\$99,300
Total Revenue	\$25,700
BC Transit Share	\$52,000
Net Municipal Share	\$19,900
Level of Service	
Population Served	12,400
Vehicles in Service	1
Revenue Hours	2,008
Performance Summary	
Annual Passengers	13,733
Passengers/hour service	6.8
Total Cost per Passenger	\$7.23
Cost Recovery	25.9%
Cost per Hour Service	\$45.70

5. IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES

This section outlines improvements to the Smithers 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 Smithers, there is the potential to improve handyDART service and to have Saturday service between Smithers and Telkwa. Taxi Saver programs could also be implemented to support handyDART service.

- In Smithers a Community Bus/Senior Shuttle service is planned to begin in August of 2008 providing about 1500 hours of service annually. This will provide approximately 5 hours of service Tuesday through Friday as well as several hours of service on Saturday.
- Additional service enhancements to Telkwa will be included in the August 2008 expansion.

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. The discussion below briefly outlines potential support strategies that may be developed in Smithers.

- 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.

7. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Town of Smithers and BC Transit approve this transit strategy as a guide for transit planning and delivery in Smithers.