



## CORPORATE REPORT

To: Regional and Corporate Services Committee  
From: Theresa Alexander, Planner 1

Date: 2024-04-11  
File No: 6430-35-23424

**Subject: Rural Transit Needs Assessment and Action Plan Update**

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### INTENT

This report is intended to advise the Fraser Valley Regional District Board of information pertaining to the Rural Transit Needs Assessment and Action Plan. Staff is not looking for a recommendation and has forwarded this information should members want more clarification or to discuss the item further.

### BACKGROUND

Subject to successful grant applications, the FVRD will undertake a regional Rural Transit Needs Assessment and Action Plan to identify transit and transportation needs, gaps, and potential solutions in rural communities within the FVRD, which includes Harrison Hot Springs, Hope, Kent, and the electoral areas.

**The project has origins in the District of Kent's request to the FVRD to assess the feasibility of handyDART service in the Kent-Harrison area. Staff's recommendation** was to make an application to **Infrastructure Canada's Rural Transit Solutions Fund (RTSF)** planning stream to undertake a broader assessment of rural transit and transportation needs, which was endorsed by the Board. Both conventional and non-conventional transit options will be explored including handyDART, on-demand and community-transit services, with an emphasis on sustainable and innovative rural transit solutions.

Fraser Health representatives from the Hope and Fraser Canyon area have also expressed the need to expand transit and transportation options for residents in the Hope area to improve access to health and non-health related transportation services.

The RTSF funding window has now opened and staff are preparing the application for submission. Staff have also been made aware of a Fraser Health Macro Health Grant available for the Hope and Fraser Canyon Communities (Areas A and B) and will be submitting an application for that funding in order show broader community support for the RTSF application.

Findings and recommendations resulting from the Plan will be used to support rural transit and transportation initiatives, projects, funding applications, and lobbying efforts needed to improve rural transit and transportation within the region.

## DISCUSSION

The FVRD Board, member municipalities, First Nations, Fraser Health, the public, and other stakeholders have identified the need to improve rural access to transit and transportation as a high **priority, especially in light of the region's loss of Greyhound bus services in 2018.**

The objective of this project is to understand existing rural transit and transportation services (public, private and non-profit) and find ways to better coordinate and build upon these services with new or improved services. Conventional and non-conventional transit options will be explored, including handyDART, on-demand, and community-transit services, with an emphasis on sustainable and innovative transit solutions.

The FVRD intends to hire a consultant to complete the tasks and project deliverables associated with the Plan, including stakeholder consultation and public engagement. A project steering committee will also provide input and guidance throughout the planning and implementation of the project.

A total project budget of \$75,000 reflects the costs of similar projects comparable in scope, geographic size, and jurisdictional complexity.

**This project relies on securing \$50,000 from Infrastructure Canada's Rural Transit Solutions Fund (RTSF),** as well as \$25,000 from the Fraser Health Macro Health Grant, which supports projects with the objective of improving the health and well-being of residents of Hope and Fraser Canyon communities. The Macro Health Grant monies will support consultation and analysis for the Hope and Fraser Canyon areas. If successful, the Macro Health Grant will be included in the RTSF application as a partnership which will add strength to that application.

Regardless of **if the FVRD is awarded funds from the Macro Health Grant, Fraser Health's involvement** in this project will be vital to ensuring that needs and opportunities related to accessing local and regional health services in rural communities is fully understood and considered by the project.

As part of the RTSF application, letters of support will be required. Staff will work with our partners to secure letters of support from local governments, First Nations and other agencies in order to strengthen the application.

## COST

Staff are proposing that all costs for planning are provided through grant funding. A total project budget of \$75,000 reflects the costs of similar projects comparable in scope, geographic size, and jurisdictional complexity.

## CONCLUSION

Staff are applying for funds needed to complete a regional Rural Transit Needs Assessment and Action Plan. The involvement of Fraser Health will help ensure the health and well-being of individuals and communities are included in the scope of project. Further updates will be provided to the Board as more information is available and as progress is made.

This project supports various policies and goals related to community well-being, transportation, and climate change within the Regional Growth Strategy. The project is also a key action item in the FVRD's Strategic Plan for 2023-2026.

## COMMENTS BY:

**Alison Stewart, Manager of Strategic Planning:** Reviewed and supported.

**Stacey Barker, Director of Regional Programs/Deputy CAO:** Reviewed and supported.

**Kelly Lownsborough, Director of Corporate Services/CFO:** Reviewed and supported.

**Jennifer Kinneman, Chief Administrative Officer:** Reviewed and supported.