

To: Regional and Corporate Services Committee

Date: 2025-09-04

From: Theresa Alexander, Planner I

Subject: North of Fraser Transit Engagement Summary and Feasibility Study - Phase 2 Report

Reviewed by: Alison Stewart, Manager of Strategic Planning  
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### RECOMMENDATION

This report is being brought forward for the Board's information. There is no staff recommendation.

### BACKGROUND

Transit services between the District of Kent (Agassiz) and the City of Mission via Highway 7, has been under consideration by BC Transit and the FVRD for some time. Initial planning began in late 2018; however, delays largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in significant delays. Planning work resumed in 2024 and based on public interest generated by the recently completed engagement process, support for the proposed route has never been stronger.

In November 2024, Phase 1 of the Feasibility Study<sup>1</sup> was presented to the Board. This phase included an exploration of transit service options along the Highway 7 corridor, a review of employment and population data, an analysis of travel patterns, and the identification of high-level service options. The Board directed staff to implement Phase 2 of the North of Fraser Transit Feasibility Study to provide updated costing, determine infrastructure requirements, determine participants in the service and undertake engagement with local governments, First Nations, the general public and stakeholders.

Phase 2 of the North of Fraser feasibility study took place between January and July 2025. The attached BC Transit *North of Fraser Transit Feasibility Study, Phase 2* final report and supporting material summarizes local government, First Nations, stakeholder engagement and other planning activities undertaken as the project moves forward.

Despite this initiative being supported by the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) Board and included in the 2024-2027 Transit Improvement Program Initiatives (TIPs), the FVRD was informed in May 2025 that the proposed transit route would not receive provincial funding to support

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<sup>1</sup> FVRD Staff Report, [North of Fraser Transit Service Feasibility Study Update](#), November 14, 2024  
[FVRD North of Fraser Transit Feasibility Study, Phase 1](#), Updated October 2024

implementation in January 2026<sup>2</sup>. While this outcome was disappointing for the FVRD Board, staff, and residents, it has not affected the project's momentum or delayed the planning process.

Work on the feasibility study and service planning has continued and staff are hopeful that a renewed funding request, as part of BC Transit's annual TIPs request,<sup>3</sup> will lead to the successful allocation of provincial funds by BC Transit, which would result in the introduction of transit services as early as January 2027.

## DISCUSSION

The attached BC Transit *North of Fraser Transit Feasibility Study, Phase 2* final report and engagement summary provides an overview of the progress to date and key findings from recent public engagement, consultation with Indigenous communities, and collaboration with key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Transportation and Transit (MoTT).

Public engagement and consultation with Indigenous communities has confirmed strong support and significant need for the proposed service.

Work completed as part of this phase has helped identify current transit usage patterns, potential user preferences, including preferred bus stop locations and service design features, such as bike racks. The identification of important travel destinations and transit connections, such as the West Coast Express, has further informed and refined the proposed service.

Key infrastructure requirements, safety considerations, and the need to explore opportunities to connect communities located a significant distance from the planned route were identified and will continue to be explored and inform service plan refinement. Access to communities located away from the route will be explored separately as part of the FVRD's Rural Transit Needs Assessment and Action Plan, which will begin later this year.

Additionally, both long-term and interim solutions to BC Transit's fleet storage capacity challenges have been addressed with the new transit facility in Chilliwack. This will further improve conditions for implementing the proposed transit service.

## Engagement Summary

Broad engagement during Phase 2 of the North of Fraser Transit Feasibility Study provided critical insights into the transit needs and priorities of communities located along the Highway 7 corridor and within Agassiz, Mission, and other nearby communities. As set out in the engagement strategy implemented by BC Transit, with support from FVRD staff<sup>4</sup>, engagement activities included a public survey and three open houses, which were promoted using social media, newspaper advertisements,

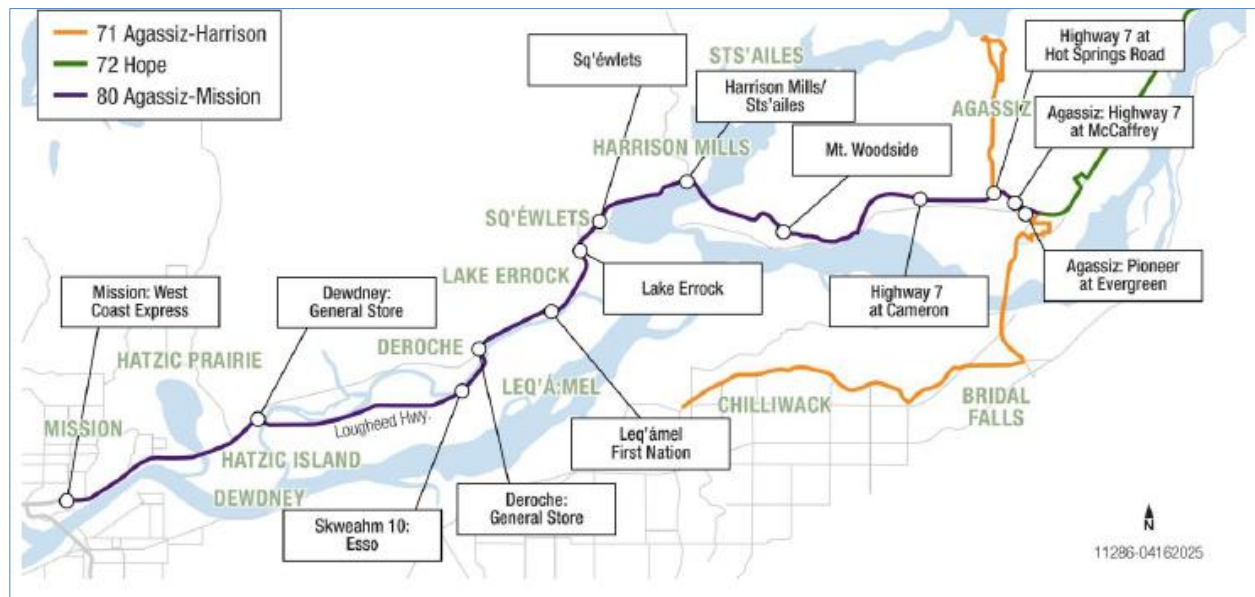
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<sup>2</sup>FVRD Staff Report, [BC Transit 2025-2026 Expansion Funding](#), May 2025

<sup>3</sup> BC Transits' Transit Improvement Program communicates and supports the provincial funding allocation process and results of proposed expansion priorities over a three-year period. Local governments must show commitment to the proposed expansions to allow BC Transit to proceed with securing sufficient funding within the Provincial Budget. <https://www.bctransit.com/about/funding-and-governance/regional/>

<sup>4</sup> FVRD Staff Report, [BC Transit - North of Fraser Public Engagement](#), March 3, 2025

posters placed at key community locations, and digital signage along the corridor. BC Transit's media release also prompted local news articles, which helped to reach the targeted audience.



*Figure 1 Proposed and existing transit routes*

The survey, conducted from April 25 to May 16, 2025, received 316 responses (292 online and 24 paper-based), reflecting a high level of community interest in the proposed service. 19% of survey respondents identified as Indigenous and 13% identified as having a disability and/or living with mental illness. Approximately 7% of the respondents were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four. As a group, the majority (43%) were between twenty-five and forty-four, 28% were between forty-five and sixty-four and the remaining 24% were over the age of sixty-five.

Open houses, from May 5-7, in Harrison Mills, Deroche, and Agassiz, were attended by a total of 33 residents. Although attendance was lower than anticipated, these events allowed for valuable in-depth conversations with potential users of the proposed route. Together, the survey and open houses offered both quantitative data and qualitative insights to help inform the proposed service design.

Consultation with Indigenous communities included preliminary meetings, as well as a well-attended community meeting hosted by Leq'á:mel First Nation (January 16, 2025), which drew approximately 50 attendees from Leq'á:mel, Sq'ewlets, Sts'ailes, and other communities along the corridor.

In April 2025, BC Transit presented information about the proposed route at the Lets'emot Community to Community Forum, which was attended by representatives from Cheam First Nation, Sq'ewqel (Seabird Island Band), Sq'ewlets (Scowlitz First Nation), Sts'ailes, Stó:lō Tribal Council, the Village of Harrison Hot Springs, the District of Kent and provincial agencies.

## Highlighted Findings:

- Strong overall support for the proposed Agassiz–Mission (Route 80) service.
- Preferences for service on both weekdays and weekends, with support for an equal distribution of trips across all days rather than concentrated services on weekdays or weekends.
- Interest in trips in both eastbound and westbound direction, depending on trip purpose
- High interest in transit connections located in Mission, particularly the West Coast Express.
- Key travel purposes included shopping, commuting, social activities, recreation, visiting family and friends, attending medical appointments, cultural activities, and community events.
- Importance of bike racks, safe and accessible stop locations, and improved access to essential amenities, such as grocery stores and healthcare services.

Conversations between BC Transit and **with St’sailes**, whose community is located approximately eight kilometres north of Highway 7, led to an understanding that direct transit service to the area is not feasible. However, there may be opportunities for BC Transit to coordinate with **the band’s** existing shuttle with this future route, facilitating transfers between the two at Highway 7. This will be explored in further detail as implementation draws nearer.

Input received during Phase 2 directly informed adjustments to the proposed service design, including stop locations, service days, and target trip times. Feedback will also be used to support future funding applications and continued planning efforts.

## Feasibility Study, Phase 2 - Final Report

The findings of the engagement have been incorporated in the *North of Fraser Transit Feasibility Study - Phase 2*, final report.

Three service options were presented for public review and comment. The options with most support consist of two round trips that would operate seven days a week. Preferred trip windows are outlined in the table below.

| Service Day | Trip Time Leaving Agassiz | Trip Time Leaving Mission |
|-------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Weekday     | Morning (7-9 AM)          | Early Evening (4-6 PM)    |
| Saturday    | Late Morning (9-11 AM)    | Early Evening (4-6 PM)    |
| Sunday      | Late Morning (9-11 AM)    | Early Evening (4-6 PM)    |

*Table 1 - Preferred trip windows for Agassiz-Mission service, identified through public engagement*

Other considerations discussed include potential bus stop locations and related infrastructure requirements. Highway 7 between Mission and Agassiz is a narrow and winding road, which accommodates high traffic volumes and at times high speeds, creating challenges for finding safe and accessible stop locations.

As noted in the report, BC Transit has been in regular contact with Ministry of Transportation and Transit (MoTT) representatives “to ensure there is awareness of this work, and to identify any opportunities for coordinating of planning or capital projects. The Ministry is currently carrying out a study focused on school bus stops along Highway 7 and has indicated that there may be potential **synergies between these projects for capital improvements.**” Minor infrastructure improvements may be facilitated through **MoTT’s Transit Minor Betterments program** which can be used to fund capital works required to create safe bus stops along the corridor.

To advance the project, the following next steps have been identified:

- BC Transit will continue to work with MoTT, First Nations, and local governments to plan required infrastructure improvements along Highway 7. This includes safe bus stop locations and potential alignment with ongoing school bus stop planning.
- With technical and administrative support from BC Transit, local governments and First Nations will submit applications to **MoTT’s Transit Minor Betterments program**<sup>5</sup> to help fund minor transit-supportive costs not covered under the BC Transit Shelter Program<sup>6</sup>.
- **BC Transit will work with Leq’á:mel First Nation, MoTT, and the FVRD to finalize a safe and functional stop location near Holachten 8.**
- The FVRD will initiate a Service Area Establishment Bylaw for the proposed transit service, outlining the scope of the service, the boundaries of the area, participants in the service, and how costs will be recovered. Separately, Transit Service Agreements will be established with participating First Nations.
- BC Transit will submit a funding request to the province for service implementation in the 2026/2027 fiscal year, which could result in service implementation as early as January 2027.
- BC Transit, supported by BC Transit staff will continue working with municipal, electoral area, and First Nations representatives to support service implementation planning and identify opportunities for service coordination, such as a shuttle service to connect communities located a significant distance from the route.

## COST

Based on 2,500 hours and two vehicles (one for service and one in reserve as a spare bus), the estimated total annual cost for the proposed service is \$638,385. Applying the BC Transit cost share formula, the net local government share of the service will be \$353,385. This cost is approximately \$53,000 higher than the earlier estimates identified in **last year’s TIP’s** due to inflation and increased operating costs. The updated costing will allow for discussions on service participation and will be used to finalize a North of Fraser service area establishment bylaw and inform transit service agreements with First Nations.

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<sup>5</sup> BC Ministry of Transportation and Transit, [Transit Minor Betterments program website](#)

<sup>6</sup> BC Transit, [Bus Shelter Program](#)

## CONCLUSION

Engagement and consultation have demonstrated strong community and stakeholder support for the proposed Agassiz–Mission transit service. Phase 2 of **BC Transit’s Feasibility Study** helped identify important service design features, including preferred travel times, key destinations, and stop locations. The study also confirmed community interest and identified operational needs, infrastructure requirements, and opportunities for coordination.

In addition to confirming community interest and need, the study also identified operational requirements, infrastructure needs, and opportunities for coordination. The findings from Phase 2 provide a strong foundation for moving the project forward. As a result, BC Transit has refined the proposed route, stop locations, and service plan. Subject to provincial funding, the earliest possible launch is January 2027. In the meantime, BC Transit, FVRD staff and partners will continue working together to address outstanding requirements and prepare for implementation, ensuring the service meets community needs.