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1. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to lay out the recommended service option and resources required to implement a transit route between the District of Kent (Agassiz) and City of Mission.

The idea of establishing transit service between these two communities was identified as a priority in both the Chilliwack Area (2012) and Abbotsford-Mission (2013) Transit Future Plans. The specific action item is to complete a feasibility study to determine the most appropriate type, level of service, and cost to provide service along 50 kilometres of Highway 7 between Kent and Mission.

This work builds upon a previous planning study that assessed the suitability of Highway 7 for transit service. The Phase 1 report provided a high-level review of ridership demand, transit service options and resources needed. The intention of this Phase 2 report is to provide updated costing, infrastructure requirements, the recommended transit service option and resources required to implement it.

2. Service Design and Costing

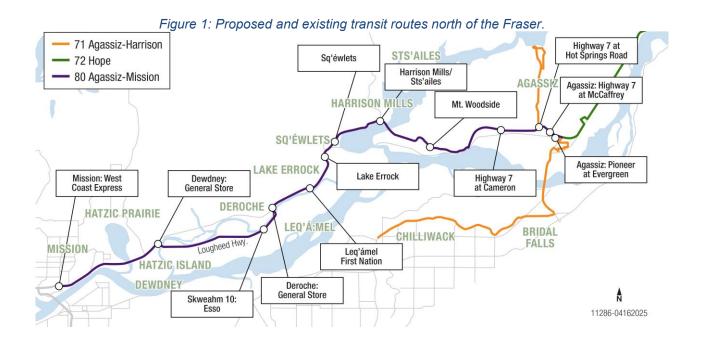
2.1 Proposed Agassiz-Mission Route

The future transit route will connect from the Pioneer and Park exchange in downtown Agassiz to the downtown Mission exchange, via Highway 7 as outlined in Figure 1 below. Connections to local service will also be available in Mission. Figure 1 also outlines proposed bus stops and existing connecting services in Kent. Note that some of the proposed bus stops in Figure 1 would be more suitable in the long term, and would depend on future development patterns.

The one-way trip length is approximately 50 kilometres with a cycle time of approximately 60 minutes, inclusive of recovery time. Service will operate bidirectionally along the Highway 7 corridor, meaning that both east and westbound service will be provided.

Following the implementation of this route, BC Transit will continue to work with all relevant stakeholders, First Nations and local government partners on potential future extensions or adjustments.

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2.2 Service Options

Three transit service options were presented during public engagement; these options are detailed in Table 1 below. These options are designed to meet passenger needs, and were informed by what was heard during the pre-engagement period. With 2500 hours and one in-service vehicle¹ currently allocated for this new route, the service will be introduced at an introductory level to begin with. Over time, and as demand develops further, it is recommended that additional service be layered in, improving opportunities to travel along the corridor.

Table 1: Service options presented during public engagement

Option	# trips/day	Trip Duration	Trip Length
Α	Two round trips, seven days a week		
В	Three round trips, weekdays only	60 minutes one way	50 km one way
С	Two round trips on weekdays, three round trips on Saturdays, and one round trip on Sundays	120 minute round trip	100 km round trip

¹ One bus has been allocated for service, and a second will be held as a spare.

2.3 Costing

Based on the 2500 hours and two vehicles (one for service, one in reserve as a spare bus), the estimated annual cost for this future service is \$638,385. Once BC Transit's cost-sharing model has been applied, the annual net municipal share is \$353,693.

3. Consultation

Consultation for this project was carried out in two phases. Prior to the broader public engagement campaign, BC Transit contacted representatives from Leq'á:mel, Sq'éwlets and Sts'ailes First Nations, and ultimately had discussions with Leq'á:mel and Sts'ailes First Nations.

These conversations helped shape an understanding of travel demand to and from First Nations communities along Highway 7, as well as illuminated any potential challenges with accessing this future transit service. Engagement with First Nations communities along the highway corridor will continue as this work progresses towards implementation.

Of particular note was a consideration raised during conversations with St'sailes First Nation. The community is located approximately eight kilometres north of Highway 7, meaning that direct transit service to the area is not feasible. However, there may be opportunities to coordinate 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.

Following these conversations, a community meeting was hosted by Leq'á:mel First Nation. This served as an opportunity for residents, including those who live elsewhere along Highway 7, to learn more about this work and provide feedback before service options were finalized for public engagement. Approximately 50 attendees were present, sharing their thoughts on potential stop locations, important destinations, trip times and service days.

Sq'éwlets First Nation provided transit-related feedback through engagement for the FVRD's Area C Official Community Plan. Through this engagement, there was a stated interest in transit stops at Moses Drive, Harrison Bay Road and Squawkum Park and campground, along with requests for improved pedestrian crossing infrastructure along Highway 7.

Shortly before the public engagement campaign launched, BC Transit and FVRD staff attended the Lets'emot Community to Community (C2C) meeting on April 2 to present a project update. Lets'emot C2C is comprised of the leadership of various Upper Fraser Valley communities including the Cheam First Nation, Seabird Island Band, Sq'éwlets First Nation, Stó:lō Tribal Council, the Sts'ailes Nation, the District of Kent and the Village of Harrison Hot Springs.

The second phase of consultation consisted of a broader public engagement campaign. Engagement results related to service options are highlighted below, with the full results detailed in a separate Engagement Summary.

The three service options detailed in Section 2.2, Table 1 were presented for public review and comment. While all options were supported to some degree, Option A was ultimately supported by

most. This option consists of two round trips that would operate seven days a week. Preferred trip windows are outlined in the table below.

Table 2: Preferred trip windows for Agassiz-Mission service, identified through public engagement

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)

Exact trip times will be further refined through conversations with BC Transit's Scheduling team. In addition to helping determine appropriate times for trips at the outset of this service, the results of this engagement will also help inform future trip times, when additional resources are available. It is recommended that a post-implementation review also be conducted at least a year after the service launches, so that more up to date feedback is available prior to making adjustments.

4. Infrastructure Requirements

4.1 Bus Stops

A significant consideration with any highway transit service is the placement of bus stops. Given the narrow, winding nature of this segment of Highway 7, there are many constrained areas that are not appropriate for stopping, and would require substantial infrastructure upgrades in order to be safely used as bus stops. These upgrades may include expanding of road shoulders, implementing crosswalks, pull-outs, deceleration lanes and other infrastructure improvements. Close collaboration with the Ministry of Transportation and Transit will be required for this work. Opportunities for improvements to pedestrian infrastructure along the highway corridor should also be monitored, as safe access to bus stops is another important consideration.

In a route that is 50 kilometres in length, bus stops will be spaced further apart than in a more urban context, with locations based on nearby residential areas and other destinations. Passenger amenities such as shelters, benches and schedule information will be recommended at key stops to improve passenger comfort and safety. Proposed bus stops are indicated on the map in Figure 2.



Figure 2: Proposed Agassiz-Mission bus stop locations along Highway 7

BC Transit Safety and Training has undertaken a review of the proposed bus stop locations and has determined that upgrades will be required in many areas in order to allow the bus to safely pull off the highway. Another area for further examination is the proposed bus stop at Leq'á:mel Way, where the ability to safely turn around in order to re-enter the highway was flagged. BC Transit will continue to work with Leq'á:mel First Nation, the Fraser Valley Regional District and the Ministry of Transportation and Transit (MoTT) to determine an appropriate stop in this area.

Given that much of the corridor is along MoTT right of way, BC Transit has been in regular contact with Ministry 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.

4.2 Operations and Maintenance Facility

The current Chilliwack transit operations and maintenance facility is at capacity, and land for a new facility has been secured. As an interim step prior to the new facility's full implementation, parking has been secured for additional buses associated with the Agassiz-Harrison route. Buses for this future service can therefore be stored in Chilliwack, reducing deadhead² that would be required had the vehicles been temporarily stored in the Abbotsford-Mission facility.

² Deadhead refers to the non-revenue service time required for the bus to get to or from its start or end point.

5. Next Steps

There are several next steps required to continue advancing this work, outlined below:

- BC Transit and FVRD staff to share the engagement results and service design to the Regional and Corporate Services Committee, FVRD Board, local governments, First Nations and the public for information.
- BC Transit, the FVRD and MoTT to identify synergies between bus stops identified by BC Transit and those identified for school bus service through MoTT's ongoing work on the Highway 7 corridor.
- BC Transit to work with the FVRD, MoTT, municipal and First Nations partners to coordinate
 applications to the Transit Minor Betterments fund as appropriate, to support capital work
 required for safe bus stops along Highway 7.
- BC Transit to work with Leq'á:mel First Nation, MoTT and the FVRD to identify an appropriate location for a bus stop proximal to Holachten 8.
- BC Transit to continue working with Sts'ailes to improve connections to the future Agassiz-Mission route.
- BC Transit to continue working with First Nations along Highway 7 before and after the launch of future transit service.
- On behalf of the FVRD, BC Transit to submit a funding request to the Province for 2026/27 service implementation.