



STAFF REPORT

To: Electoral Area Services Committee

Date: 2025-12-04

From: Theresa Alexander, Planner I

Subject: Rural Transit Needs Assessment and Action Plan – Project Launch and Update

Reviewed by: Alison Stewart, Manager of Strategic Planning
David Urban, Deputy Director of Regional Services
Stacey Barker, Director of Regional Services/Deputy CAO
Jennifer Kinneman, Chief Administrative Officer

RECOMMENDATION

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

BACKGROUND

In June 2023, the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) received a request from the District of Kent to assess **the feasibility of integrating BC Transit's handyDART¹** program within the Agassiz-Harrison (AGH) Transit service. In response to this request, the Board approved a broader and more inclusive approach by undertaking a regional Rural Transit Needs Assessment and Action Plan, which would include an emphasis on access to local and regional health services. A funding application was submitted to the Rural Transit Solutions Fund (RTSF) to undertake the project.

The Rural Transit Needs Assessment and Action Plan is a **key action item in the FVRD's Strategic Plan 2023–2026** and supports the implementation of the Fraser Valley Future 2050 Regional Growth Strategy (RGS).

The project will identify transportation gaps, needs, and potential solutions for rural communities **within the FVRD's electoral areas, First Nations, and the District of Hope, District of Kent, and Village of Harrison Hot Springs.**

It will consider a range of trip purposes that are essential for daily living, including access to health and social services, education, employment, shopping, and key destinations. It will explore the feasibility of **BC Transit's custom services, such as handyDART, Health Authority transportation programs, and**

¹ handyDART is an accessible, door-to-door shared transit service for people with permanent or temporary disabilities that prevent them from using fixed-route transit without assistance from another person.

innovative rural transit solutions to help residents in rural and remote communities get to where they need to go.

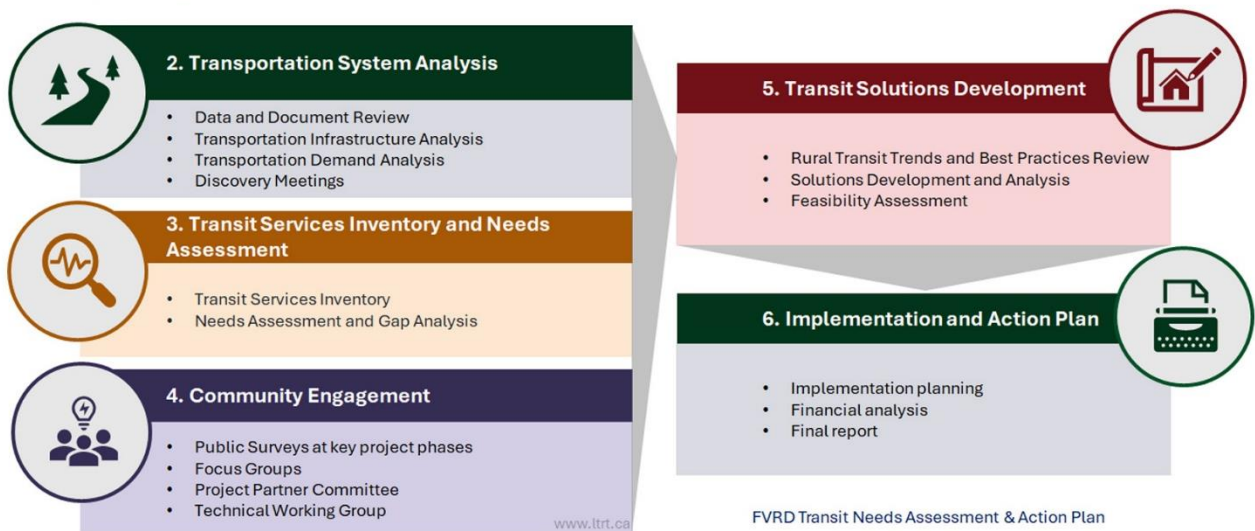
DISCUSSION

In March 2025, staff received notification that the project had been awarded federal funding through the RTSF in addition to the funding awarded through the Fraser Health Macro Health Grant. Staff began the procurement process to secure a project consultant once the administration of federal funds was finalized.

In September 2025, Left Turn Right Turn Inc. (LTRT) was selected as the project consultant, with support from the Firelight Group, which specializes in Indigenous engagement and health equity. The project is lead by an experienced transportation planning team, familiar with the unique transportation challenges faced by rural communities in BC.

Updated project **timelines align with both Fraser Health and Infrastructure Canada's reporting requirements**, with project completion anticipated in the fall of 2026. The following infographic shows the various tasks and activities of the project.

Key Project Tasks and Activities



Engagement and Consultation

Considerable public and stakeholder engagement will be integral to identifying unmet travel needs, community priorities, and feasible mobility solutions.

Since officially launching the project in September, LTRT has met with FVRD staff, reviewed background documents, and initiated discovery interviews with key community representatives,

helping to establish a baseline understanding of local needs and the rural context specific to the region.

Early and ongoing consultation with BC Transit, Fraser Health, the District of Hope, Village of Harrison Hot Springs, District of Kent, FVRD electoral areas, First Nations, non-profit organizations, social service **agencies, etc. will be key to the project's overall success. Staff are currently establishing a Technical Working Group** and a broader Project Partner group consisting of the above-mentioned organizations, to provide guidance at key stages of the project.

The development of a comprehensive engagement strategy is underway and will be shared with the Board once complete. A project page will be launched in the new year **on the FVRD's Have Your Say** website. This page will provide project information, background materials, reports, and project updates as they become available, as well as host the public survey and other engagement tools used during the project.

Given the broad geographic scope of the study area, public engagement will be delivered primarily online, with additional measures to support participation from residents without internet access or who face barriers to online engagement. These measures will include options to complete a paper survey (mailed to residents by request or for pick-up at key locations within communities) or to complete the survey by phone.

The FVRD will promote engagement opportunities on its social media; however, targeted efforts, informed and supported by the Project Partner group, will ensure awareness and participation for individual communities. This will include distributing physical posters on community bulletin boards and at key destinations and sharing information through community-specific email distribution lists.

COST

The project's \$75,000 budget of is fully funded through external funding, including \$50,000 in federal funding (**Infrastructure Canada's Rural Transit Solutions Fund – Planning Stream**) and \$25,000 from the Fraser Health Authority (Macro Health Grant for Hope and Fraser Canyon Communities).

CONCLUSION

With federal funding awarded and the consultant hired, the Rural Transit Needs Assessment and Action Plan is now proceeding. Staff will continue to provide project updates to the Board and **information will also be available on the FVRD's website and engagement platform, Have Your Say.**