

To: Fraser Valley Aboriginal Relations Committee
From: Alison Stewart, Manager of Strategic Planning

Date: 2018-06-19
File No: 8500-01

Subject: FVRD Transit Services - First Nations Participation

INTENT

This report is intended to advise the Fraser Valley Aboriginal Relations Committee of information pertaining to FVRD regional transit and the participation of First Nations in these services. Staff is not looking for a recommendation and has forwarded this information should members want more clarification to discuss the item further.

STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS

Foster a Strong & Diverse Economy

Support Healthy & Sustainable Community

Provide Responsive & Effective Public Services

BACKGROUND

The Fraser Valley Regional District has been a municipal partner with BC Transit on the provision of regional transit since 2012 when the Region assumed responsibility for the Agassiz-Harrison (AGH) transit route 11 from the District of Kent. Since this time, the region has seen the addition of higher capacity buses on the AGH route, the introduction and continuing expansion of the Fraser Valley Express (FVX) route 66 connecting the Cities of Chilliwack and Abbotsford to TransLink services at the Carvolth Exchange in Langley and in 2017 the introduction of the route 22 Hope transit service between the District of Hope and Agassiz. While the Hope service connects communities along the north side of the Fraser, the route is also structured to provide limited local service within the District of Hope's boundaries.

The FVRD has service agreements in place to serve Cheam First Nation and Seabird Island Band and discussions are continuing with Chawathil First Nation to provide service to that community in the near term.

DISCUSSION

The FVRD's regional transit service is primarily one of connecting communities within the FVRD. As of 2018, residents can travel from Hope to downtown Vancouver on one form or another of public transit.

Current services

The primary consideration for providing service along a provincial highway is ensuring that there is a safe location for buses to drop off and pick up passengers. The practice of waving a bus down may be appropriate on lower speed roads, but the volumes and high speeds along provincial highways, such as Highway 7 and Highway 9 make such a practice unsafe. It was such safety concerns that led to the first transit agreement with Cheam First Nation where a more appropriate bus stop location was established on Highway 9.

Providing public transit in rural areas is a challenge because of the long distances between communities and sparse populations in between. First Nations communities outside of urban centres have limited transportation choices and health and safety issues are a concern with people walking along or hitchhiking on rural highways. The introduction of the Hope service provided an opportunity to engage First Nations on participating in the new service.

Seabird Island Band has been actively interested in transit service to their community for a number of years and was involved in the routing of the No. 22 service on Seabird Island. The bus travels through Seabird Island on Chowat Rd with the bus stop in a central location adjacent to the Band office, Seabird Island Community School and Seabird Island College campus. Routing the bus along Chowat Rd and locating the bus stop in a centralized location is more convenient and safe for Seabird Island residents.

The FVRD is currently in discussions with Chawathil First Nation to provide service to their community approximately 10 kilometres west of Hope. Access concerns are being addressed and we are awaiting final confirmation from Chawathil Chief and Council on this proposal.

In addition to agreements with First Nations along the AGH and Hope routes, the FVRD has also welcomed Xyolhemeylh Children & Family services as a vendor for FVX fare products.

Future services (potential)

There are several other First Nations communities between Hope and Agassiz that may be interested in participating in the service, though costs related to additional service hours and safety considerations will need to be assessed and addressed.

Additional opportunities for First Nations participation in FVRD transit services will come from a proposed route connecting Agassiz to the District of Mission on the north side of the Fraser River. There are a number of First Nation and non-First Nation communities that have expressed an interest in this proposal. A feasibility study for servicing this route is included in BC Transit's most recent 3-year

Transit Improvement Process (TIP) letter and will be initiated in 2018-19. The feasibility study will involve consultation with First Nations along the route to determine demand, level of service and potential costs.

Implementation of new or expanded services will be dependent upon the completion of new transit facilities as current facilities in both Chilliwack and Abbotsford are at capacity and cannot accommodate any new buses at this time.

COST

No costs are associated with this report

CONCLUSION

The FVRD provides regional transit services connecting communities between Hope and Metro Vancouver. As opportunities arise, the FVRD is engaging First Nations to introduce transit service to their communities.

Barclay Pitkethly, Director of Regional Programs

Reviewed and supported

Mike Veenbaas, Director of Financial Services

Reviewed and supported. Any recoveries received are credited back to the specific transit service and any costs associated with new/expanded services are borne by the service's participants.

Paul Gipps, Chief Administrative Officer

Reviewed and supported