

# TRANSIT *future*

▶ service plan

Fort St. John

---

2024





# Territorial Acknowledgement

We acknowledge with respect that BC Transit carries out its work on the traditional territories of indigenous nations throughout British Columbia.

Here in Fort St. John we are on the lands of the Treaty 8 First Nations, including Blueberry River First Nation, Doig River First Nation, Halfway River First Nation, Saulteau First Nation.

***We are grateful to live, work, and play on their traditional lands.***

# Table of Contents

<b>01</b>	Transit Vision	<b>06</b>	Route Performance	<b>11</b>	Custom Service Priorities
<b>02</b>	Shaping Your Transit Future	<b>07</b>	Transit Need	<b>12</b>	Ongoing Infrastructure Priorities
<b>03</b>	BC Transit Corporate Initiatives	<b>08</b>	Engagement	<b>13</b>	Investment Strategy
<b>04</b>	Transit Today	<b>09</b>	Transit Operations and Maintenance Facility	<b>14</b>	Moving Forward
<b>05</b>	System Performance	<b>10</b>	Conventional Service Priorities	<b>15</b>	Acknowledgements

# 01 Transit Vision

The Fort St. John Transit System provides a reliable transportation service which welcomes and provides a safe environment for the diverse communities in the City.

As the City continues to grow and adapt, the transit system will need to grow and change with it. Transit is and will continue to be part of the City's climate goals by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and supporting the development of compact and efficient communities.

The Fort St. John Transit System is a critical part of the greater transportation network throughout the City. Connections between transit, active transportation, and other modes of transportation are necessary to ensure the success and efficiency of the transit system.



Transit provides a reliable transportation service that gets people to where they need to be in a sustainable manner



Transit supports compact and complete communities



Transit is part of a well developed, multi-modal transportation system

# The Foundations

## **Fort St. John Official Community Plan (2017)**

- Apply a hierarchy of street uses and give priority to walking, cycling, and public transit before private vehicle use
- Consider seasonally adjusting transit services to provide more frequent service during the winter months
- Support the development of supportive housing and community care facilities preferably close to community services and public transit
- Support economic development activity in the City to locate in key areas by providing supports such as transit hubs, parking, sidewalks, and the ability to access these nodes through a variety of means
- Improve the transit centre downtown as part of the Energize Downtown program
- Enhance pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, especially in the vicinity of transit routes, which in turn supports transit use

## **Transportation Master Plan (2015)**

- Prioritize the implementation of sidewalks and crosswalks near transit routes
- Ensure that bus stops and crossings along transit routes are fully accessible
- Ensure the provision of transit amenities and infrastructure
- Provide signage and wayfinding to indicate transit routes and schedules as well as to direct transit users to common destinations
- Introduce employee transit incentive programs
- Introduce a “Transit Day” where city and elected officials ride the bus and greet the customers
- Pursue the U-Pass program with Northern Lights College to encourage more students to use the transit system

## **Housing Strategy (2020)**

- Reduce parking requirements for developments where the development has easy access to both transit and community amenities and services

## **Your Voice Fort St. John (2018)**

- Developed to support decision-making on community investments aimed at improving the quality of life in the city, including transit.



# 02 Shaping Your Transit Future

The role of the Transit Future Service Plan is to:

**Build** on existing planning and add service and infrastructure priorities for the community

**Review** what has changed for the community

**Inform** both the planning and operational activities

**Drive** a range of objectives and actions that will deliver a fit for purpose network across the community

**Guide** decision making to procure and deliver the desired network

**Engage** with the community



# 03 BC Transit Corporate Initiatives

Over the next five years, Fort St. John and BC Transit will continue to evolve the transit system by introducing new programs and technologies to improve the customer experience and reduce the impact on the environment.

BC Transit's Strategic Plan provides the blueprint for how we will facilitate the transformation and pursue our common vision of the future to create responsive and reliable services, improving integration with other mobility providers, introducing electronic fares, building more transit supportive infrastructure and transitioning to greener fleets.

## Low Carbon Fleet Program

<https://www.bctransit.com/low-carbon-fleet-program>

## OnDemand

<https://www.bctransit.com/ondemand>

## Umo

<https://www.bctransit.com/umo>

## NextRide

<https://www.bctransit.com/nextride-faq>

## BC Transit Development Referral Program

<https://www.bctransit.com/development-referral-program>

## Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

# BC Transit Corporate Initiatives

## Low Carbon Fleet Program

BC Hydro will help determine the readiness of the electricity infrastructure to support electric fleets across the province.

BC Transit will work with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure to refine the anticipated funding requirements for buses and new operation and maintenance facilities.

## OnDemand

This is an exciting initiative that uses technology to dynamically dispatch a bus or fleet of vehicles to locations dictated by customers using an app or phone-in service. BC Transit has completed a feasibility study on digital on-demand transit and is rolling out phase one in Kelowna this year, with a view to add more communities in future years, based on the success of the initial phase.

## Umo

Smart ticketing providing new ways to pay. BC Transit is working to not only improve rider convenience but also enable mobility partnerships and create new data collection opportunities.

The system also accommodates a mix of fare products, including cash fares.



# BC Transit Corporate Initiatives

## NextRide

NextRide was launched in 2022 in Fort St. John and offers door-to-door journey planning. It provides bus location information to customers via transit apps, enhances operations control and route information for the operator.

## Development Referral Program

Local governments or developers can send any referrals and supporting information to BC Transit to review.

BC Transit will provide comments to submitter about how the proposal may affect current or future transit service and infrastructure, and how the application or plan could be changed to better support current or future transit service and infrastructure.

## Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

BC Transit is committed to building an inclusive environment that reflects the diversity of the communities we serve – this means listening to and meeting the transportation needs of British Columbians. Future plans include furthering engagement with Indigenous communities and using Gender-Based Analysis+ (GBA+) to integrate multiple perspectives in transit planning, and guide decisions that provide the best experience for all riders.

# 04 Transit Today

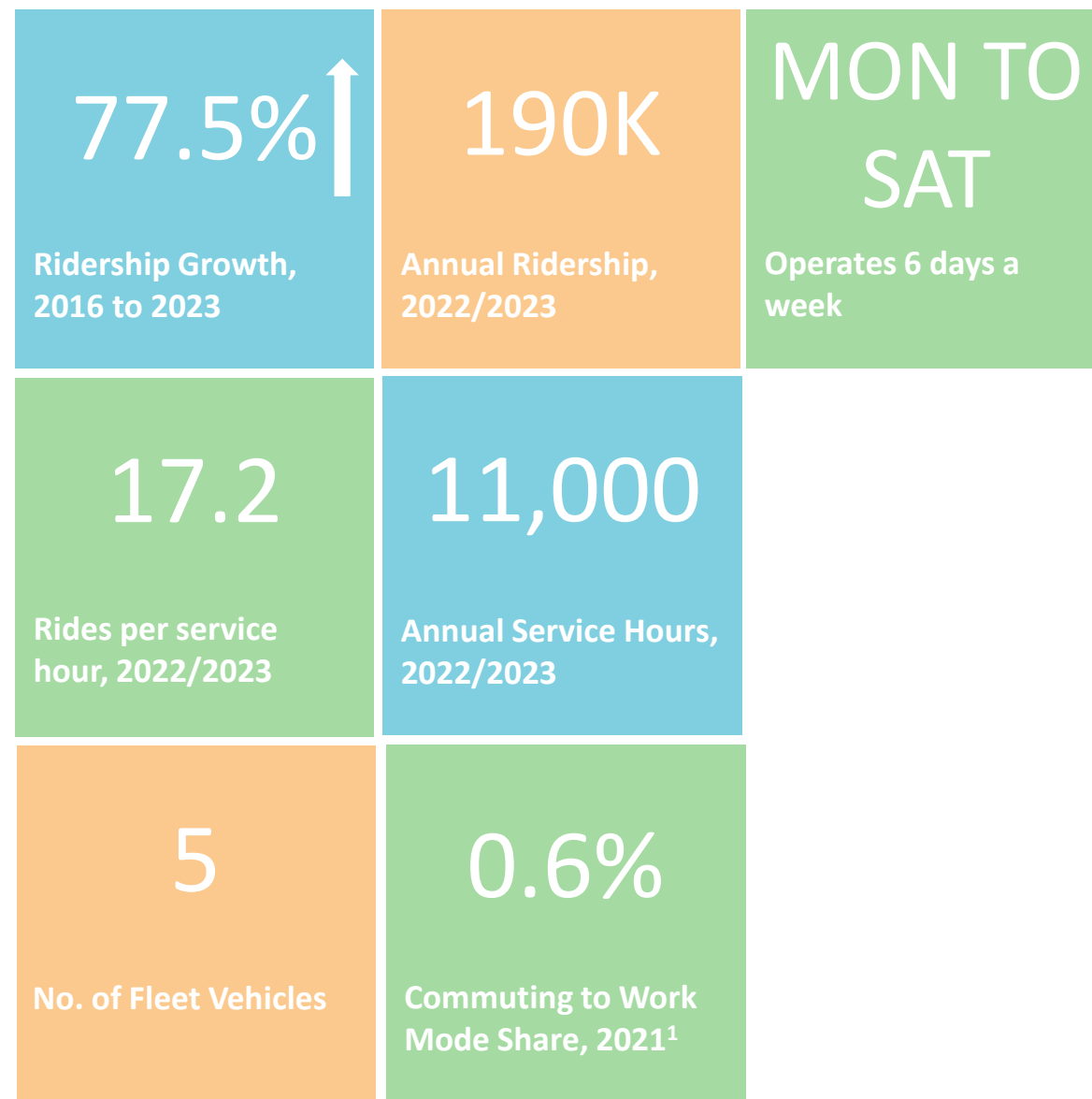
Fort St. John conventional Transit System consists of five routes:

- 1 Northside
- 2 Southside
- 3 Central-Prospect Park
- 4 Southeast
- 5 Southwest

Routes 1, 2, and 3 provide local transit service Monday to Saturday, while routes 4 and 5 provide targeted transit service for K-12 students Monday to Friday. The graphic to the right show some of the key information about the conventional transit system.

On-request service is available to and from Charlie Lake and the District of Taylor. Customers must book trips in advance.

The Fort St. John transit system also provides handyDART service for people with a permanent or temporary disability that prevents them from using the conventional transit system without aid.

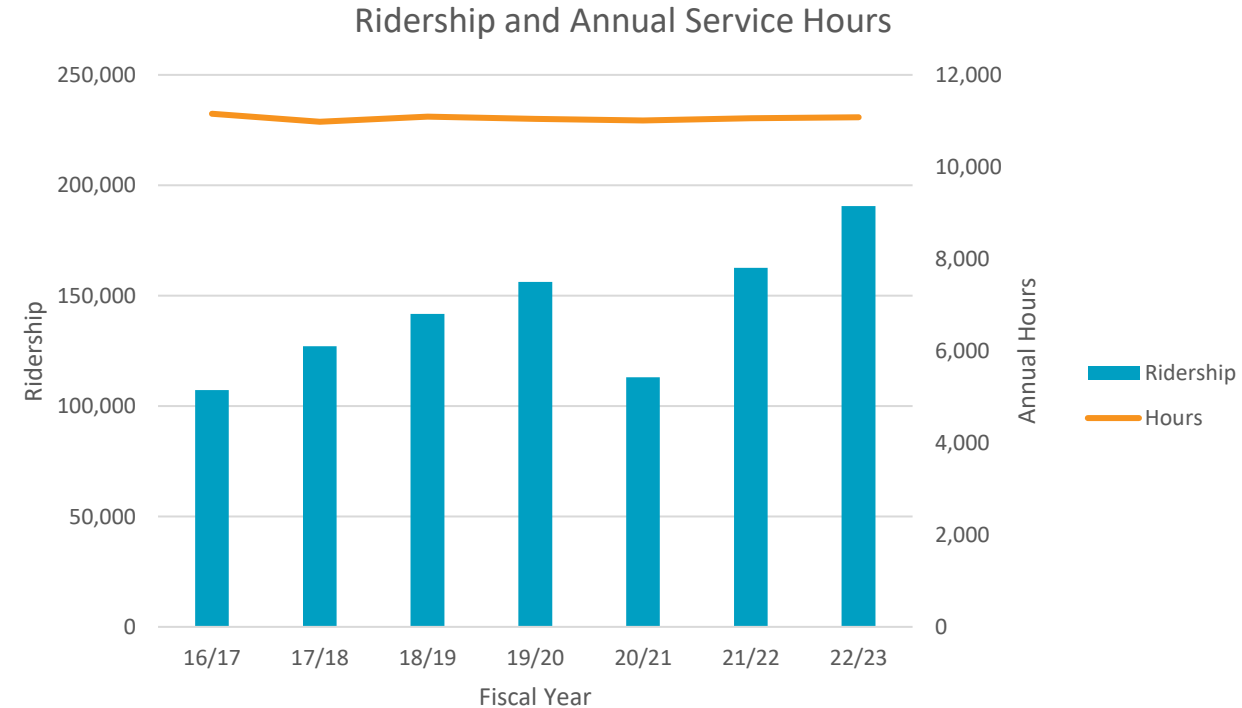


<sup>1</sup>Source: Statistics Canada 2021 Census

## 05 System Performance

Overall, ridership has been increasing year-over-year, with the exception being 2020 due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Between the 2016/2017 fiscal year and the 2022/2023 fiscal year, ridership grew by 83,000 annual rides, an increase of 77.5 per cent.

Over the same period annual service hours have remained consistent at approximately 11,100 hours annually.



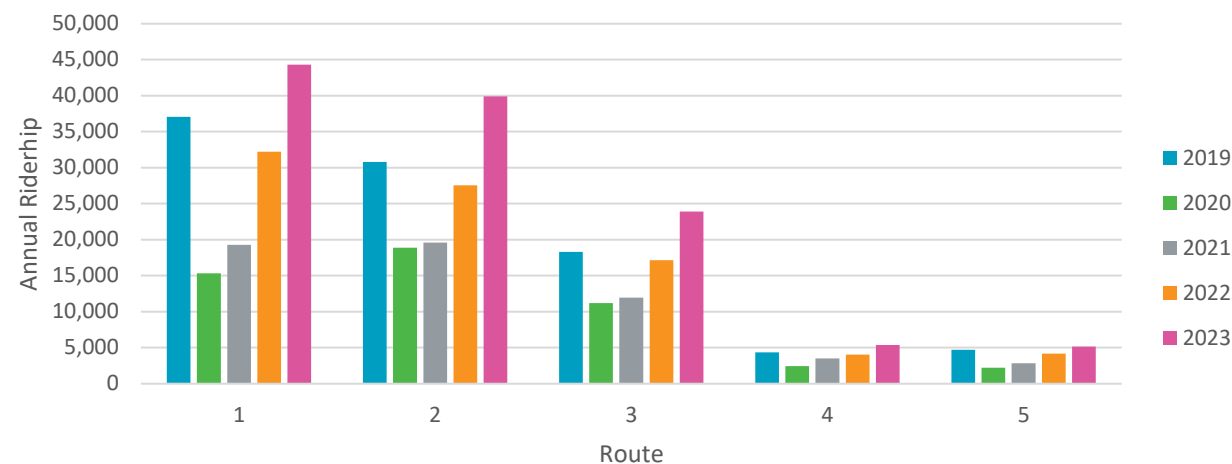


# 06 Route Performance

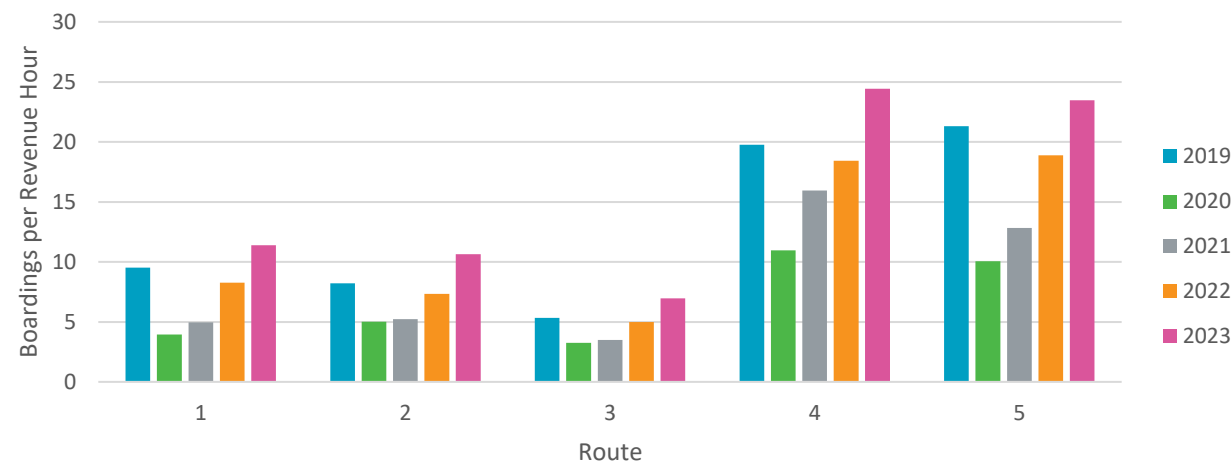
## Key Takeaways

- Most of the ridership is carried on routes 1, 2, and 3, with route 1 having the highest ridership.
- Routes 4 and 5 are targeted routes which provide service to K-12 schools at bell times. While they carry a lower total volume of passengers, they out-perform the other local routes in terms of boardings per revenue hour.
- For local routes performance, the route 2 is the highest performer, followed by route 3, and then route 1.
- All routes were affected by the impacts of COVID-19, with ridership dropping in 2020 and starting to recover in 2021 through 2022 and exceeding pre-COVID-19 ridership starting in 2023.

Annual Ridership by Route



Boardings per Revenue Hour



## 07 Transit Need

Between 2016 and 2021 Fort St. John grew by 1,205 people.

Compared to the rest of British Columbia, Fort St. John is younger with a higher percentage of youths, a lower percentage of seniors, and a lower average age.

Compared to provincial average, residents are more affluent with a lower proportion of low-income residents across all age groups.

With a relatively younger population, there is an opportunity to appeal to young people to create lifetime transit users.

+5.9%



Population growth,  
2016-2021

21.3%

Proportion of youths  
(0-14 years), Fort St.  
John 2021

14.3%

Proportion of youths  
(0-14 years), BC 2021

21,465

Population, Fort St.  
John 2021

8.3%

Proportion of seniors  
(65 years and over),  
Fort St. John 2021

20.3%

Proportion of seniors  
(65 years and over),  
BC 2021

34.1

Average Age, Fort St.  
John 2021

8.1%

Low-income  
Residents, Fort St.  
John 2021

10.8%

Low-income  
Residents, BC 2021

Source: Statistics Canada 2021 Census

# 08 Engagement

## What is Public Engagement

Public engagement, also commonly referred to as public participation, is any process that involves the public in problem-solving or decision-making. It is premised on the belief that residents should have meaningful opportunities to engage in the decisions that affect their communities. It moves past one-way communication and welcomes residents into the decision-making process by ensuring timely information and awareness of opportunities to provide input before decisions are made.

Not all topics require the same level of public engagement. Based on the impact of the decision or change, and the input that is needed to inform the decision, different tools and techniques are considered in each instance.

## Why do we Engage

We engage because, although we have skilled technical experts working across our organization, no one knows the community and its nuances better than the people living there or taking transit each and every day. When we engage, their input becomes part of the decision-making process, helping our leaders, employees and communities deliver services that are responsive to what the community has indicated as important to them.

When public engagement is meaningful, everyone gains something valuable. We benefit from hearing diverse perspectives and gain an understanding of the public's interests, concerns, and priorities. The public gains a greater understanding of our roles, responsibilities and requirements. With stronger relationships and two-way communications, our accountability to our communities is enhanced. With timely access to quality information, there is less misinformation, and residents feel heard.



# 08 How we engaged

As part of BC Transit’s commitment to public engagement, outreach was carried out to receive feedback. Engagement occurred in two phases:

**1 - Stakeholder Workshops:** Two workshops with key community stakeholders were held in April 2023. The feedback gathered during this workshop was used to inform the proposed transit service options that were presented to the public.

**2 - Project Website and Survey:** The project website acted as a central hub for information on the project and hosted a public survey to gain feedback from the wider public. The survey was available from September 11 to 25, 2023.

The detailed results of the public engagement can be found in the engagement summary available [here](#).

BC Transit continues to engage with Treaty 8 First Nations.



**363 Online Survey Respondents**



**13 Stakeholder Workshop Attendees**



## **Project Website**

The central hub for project information and participation.  
[engage.bctransit.com/fortstjohn2023](https://engage.bctransit.com/fortstjohn2023)



## **Internal Bus Ads**

In vehicle ads directing people to the project website



## **Newspaper Ads**

Print ads directing people to go to the project website in the Alaska Highway News



## **Radio Ads**

Radio ads directing people to the project website on CKFU Moose FM



## **Digital Advertisements**

Connecting to the project website

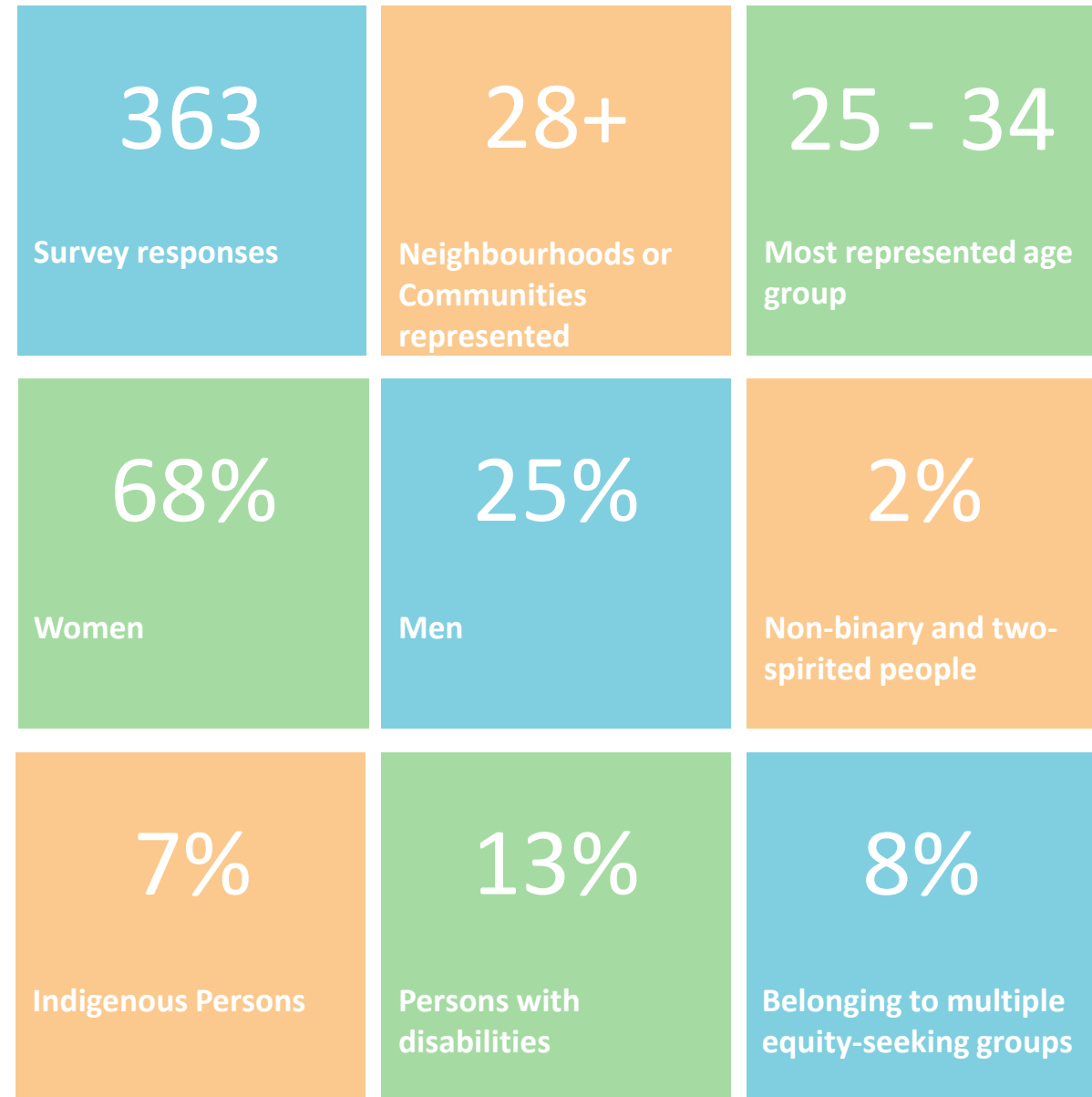


## **Social Media**

Social media posts Facebook and Instagram about the project and how to participate

## 08 Who we heard from

Information provided on this slide reflects the demographics of those who participated in aspects of the engagement process. While the survey methodology was not intended to be scientific or completely representative of the population of Fort St. John, the number of survey responses and website visits received was positive relative to other recent engagement within BC Transit's regional systems and is provided for context.



## 08 What we heard

Strong support for all the transit service priorities presented.

The priorities from highest to lowest were:

1. Routing changes and network restructure
2. Later Evening Trips
3. Adding Sunday and Holiday Service
4. Earlier Morning Trips
5. Transit Service to Taylor
6. Transit Service to Charlie Lake

Outside of the service proposals specifically identified, other issues identified included:

- Improving bus stops with shelters and other customer amenities
- Improving the service frequency
- Improving transit service to K-12 schools
- Making routes more direct
- More and easier to understand signage
- Improved accessibility
- Introducing electronic fare payment
- Better maintenance and snow clearing of bus stops





# 08 Ongoing Engagement

## Voice of the Rider

BC Transit believes that in order to understand our riders and prospective riders better, we need to move a step closer to your community and make the community a part of important business decisions. Our Voice of the Rider panel is an effort to drive community engagement on every project we undertake, understand the satisfaction levels of our riders, and take recommendations and suggestions to improve the overall transit experience.

## Engaging with Indigenous Communities

BC Transit is developing a strategy for increasing engagement with First Nations and supporting meaningful reconciliation. We recognize the need to engage with communities in ways that are appropriate for each culture. BC Transit will continue to work with the Treaty 8 First Nations to understand how we can best serve their communities.

**Do you have something to say  
about transit in your community?**

**VOICE**  
of the Rider



Learn more at [engage.bctransit.com/frequently-asked-questions](https://engage.bctransit.com/frequently-asked-questions)

# 09 Transit Operations and Maintenance Facility

The current Operations and Maintenance Facility is at capacity. Prior to any service expansion, a new facility with additional capacity is required. The City of Fort St. John and BC Transit are undertaking a study to determine the requirements and ideal location for this new facility. The study is expected to take approximately one year. The costs and timeframe for the facility itself will be determined as part of the study.

Once the new Operations and Maintenance Facility is complete, the expansion priorities can be implemented.



# 10 Conventional Service Priorities

Priority	Description	Expansion Resources
Later Evening Service and Sunday Service	This expansion would increase the service span to approximately 10:00 p.m. Monday to Saturday as well as introduce transit service on Sunday from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.	4,150 annual service hours and two buses
Introduce Service to Margaret Ma Murray School and the Airport	This expansion would introduce a new route that would provide transit service to both the Airport and Margaret Ma Murray Community School.	5,200 annual service hours and two buses
Transit System Restructure	A fundamental restructuring of the transit system to allow for more flexibility and growth.	6,600 annual service hours and two buses.

# 1. Later Evening Service and Sunday Service

This priority would extend the service span on all the local Fort St. John routes to approximately 10:00 p.m. Monday to Saturday and introduce Sunday service from approximately 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Later evening service and Sunday service were identified as the second and third highest priorities through public engagement.

Expansion	Annual Hours
Monday to Friday service span	2,100
Saturday service span	500
Sunday transit service	1,550





## 2. Introduce service to Margaret Ma Murray School and the Airport

Both the area surrounding Margaret Ma Murray Community School and the Airport do not have transit service. These areas were consistently identified by stakeholders, members of the public and First Nations as priority areas to expand transit service to. This priority would introduce transit service with approximately 70-minute frequency throughout the day between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. Monday to Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Saturday, and 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Sunday.

5,200

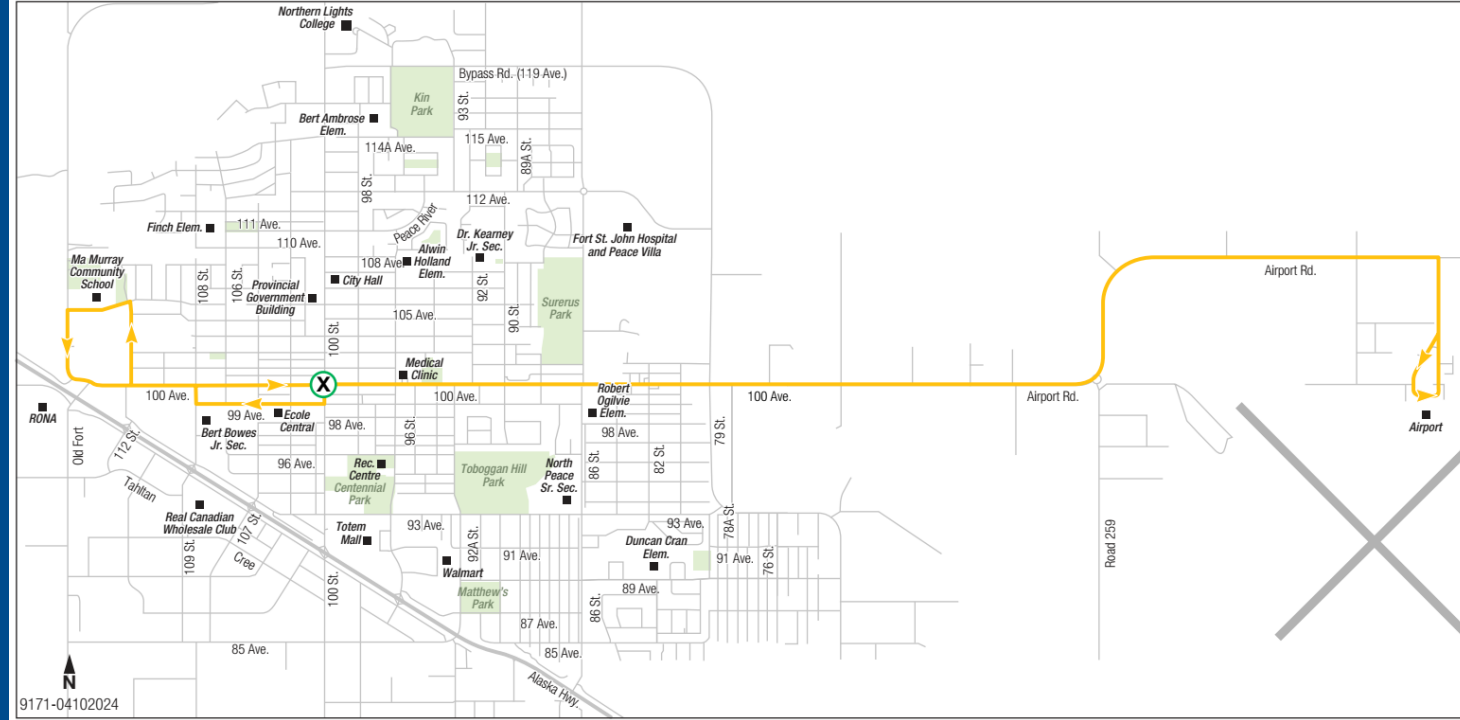
Annual service hours

2\*

Additional Vehicles

\*To be determined during the three-year improvement process

6 Airport/Ma Murray



### 3. System Restructure

This priority represents a fundamental change to the current transit system. By restructuring the system, it creates opportunities to grow the system to provide services to new areas and at higher frequencies, which isn't possible under the current system structure. This was identified as the highest priority through public engagement.

As part of the system restructure, all local transit routes will change with higher levels of service frequency during peak times and lower levels of service frequency during off-peak times. Additional engagement and change management will be required before implementation.

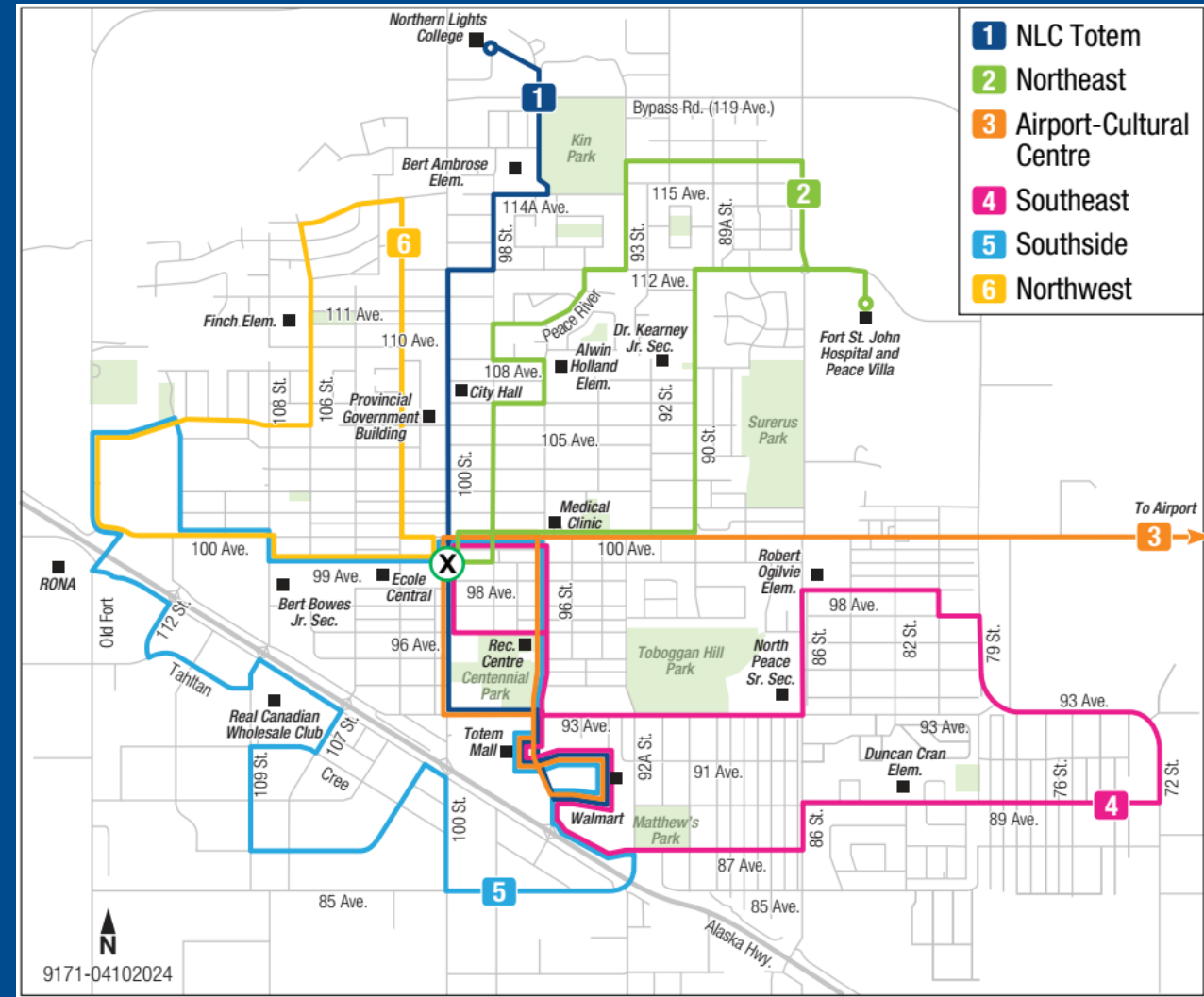
6,600

## Annual service hours

2\*

## Additional Vehicles

\*To be determined during the three-year improvement process



# 11 Custom Transit Priorities

Priority	Description	Expansion Resources
Introducing Sunday Service	This expansion would introduce handyDART on Sunday from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.	525 annual service hours, 1 additional vehicle
Matching service to demand	As the conventional transit system grows both in area and ridership, demand for custom transit services can be expected to grow. The timing of future expansion to custom transit will be determined through operational demands.	To be determined

# 12 Ongoing Infrastructure Priorities

Priority	Description
Operations and Maintenance Facility	The current Operations and Maintenance Facility is at capacity. Prior to any service expansion, a new facility with additional capacity is required.
Downtown Transit Hub	Redesign the transit hub as identified in the 100 Street Corridor Plan, with consideration for northbound, eastbound, and westbound transit routes as well
Invest in bus stop infrastructure	<p>Improving accessibility, safety and providing additional amenities at bus stops. Seek investment through capital planning and funding opportunities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Transit Shelter Program</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Transit Minor Betterments Program</a></li></ul>



# 13 Investment Strategy

## Funding the plan

To achieve the goals of this plan, capital and operating investments in the transit system will be required over the next five years and beyond. Annual operating costs are based on service hours that are projected to increase by over 15,950 annual hours, which represents a significant increase in service.

The plan also calls for capital investments that include:

- A new transit facility
- An additional six buses added to the transit fleet
- New transit exchanges or upgrades to existing transit exchanges
- Improvements to customer amenities at transit stops

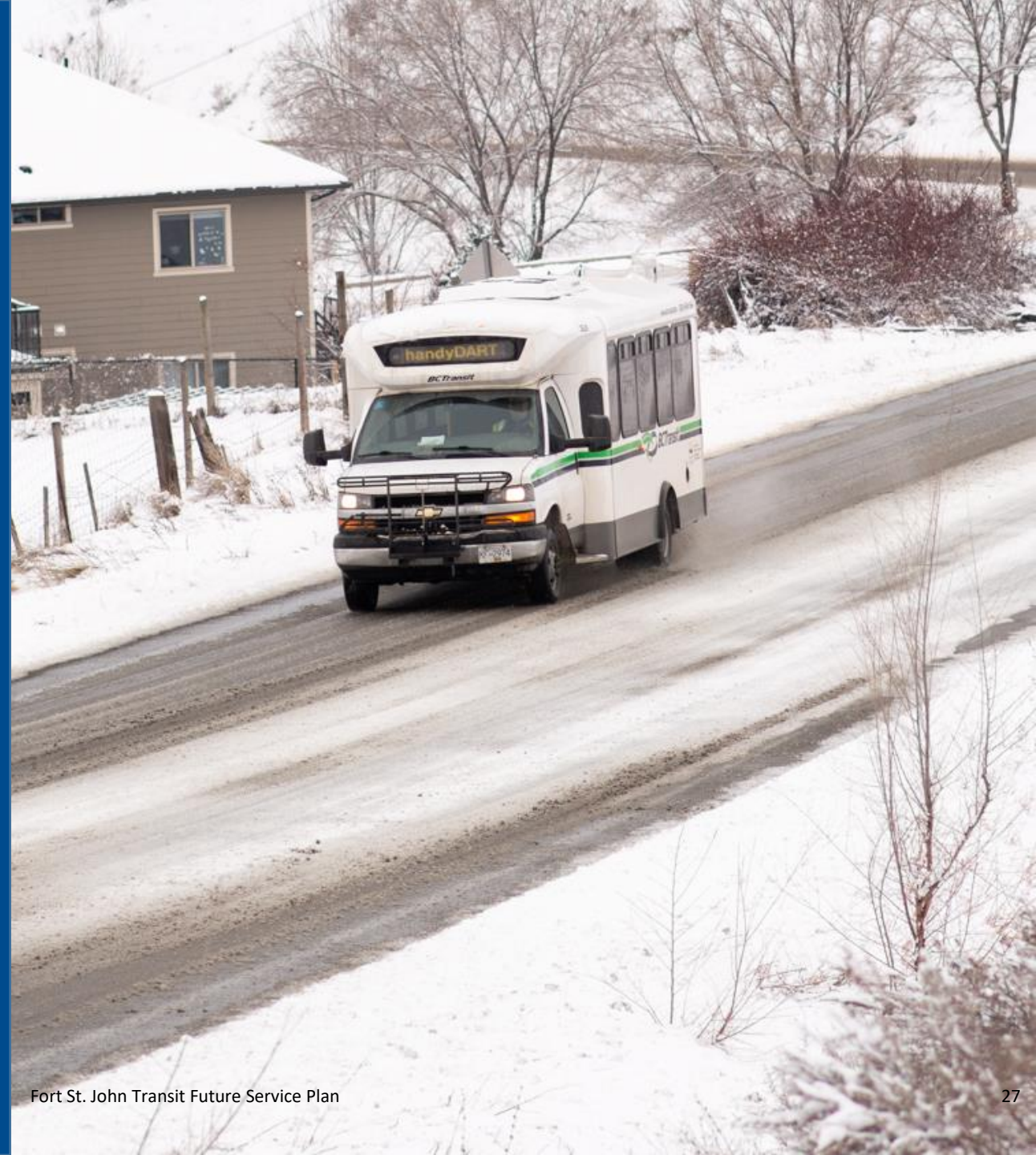


# 14 Moving Forward

## Monitoring and Implementation

Performance of the transit system is monitored on an annual basis, which is typical for transit systems of this size. Performance may be monitored more closely after a significant service change to evaluate the change.

Service improvements will be integrated into the Three-Year Transit Improvement Process (TIP), which is updated on an annual basis. Infrastructure improvements will be incorporated into BC Transit's Capital Plan. Prior to implementation of service changes, BC Transit planning staff will work with Fort St. John staff to ensure service improvements appropriately reflect local needs. Additional targeted engagement may be conducted.



# 14 Moving Forward: Timeline





# 15 Acknowledgments

Thank you,

The development of this Transit Future Service Plan provides the planning overview for the development of the Fort St. John Transit System. This plan was made possible by participation from provincial and local governments, key stakeholders and the public. BC Transit would like to thank staff from:

- City of Fort St. John
- Pacific Western Transportation
- District of Taylor
- Peace River Regional District
- Doig River First Nation
- Northern Lights College
- Employment Connections
- Northern Development Initiatives Trust
- Fort St. John Public Library

