

Dawson Creek Transit System Service Review 2006

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Dawson Creek Transit System Transit Service Review

1.0 INTRODUCTION

At the request of the City of Dawson Creek, BC Transit has conducted a service review of the existing conventional transit system. A review of the existing door-to-door transportation service for seniors and persons with a disability, currently operated by the non-profit 'Step Up 'n Ride' Society, is also provided. The following report describes existing transportation services in Dawson Creek and develops options that complement and enhance those services.

The findings of this report are based upon discussions with Dawson Creek Transit operating staff, community officials and staff, Step Up 'N Ride Program staff, Yellow Cabs/ACTaxi staff, passenger comments obtained from two surveys carried out in Fall 2004, and service review objectives. The two surveys include: i) a comprehensive two-week passenger count, and ii) an on-board passenger survey.

The objectives were developed in consultation with the City and are listed as follows:

Service Objectives:

1. To increase the accessibility of transit;
2. To focus service on the needs of commuters for school and work;
3. To extend service to all major activity centres and all new major residential areas and review service to those areas that are infilling or increasing in density;
4. To provide service to those groups, particularly senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and youths, less likely to have access to alternative modes of transportation;
5. Integrate transit considerations into the land-use approvals process.

Performance Objectives:

- Use Key Performance Indicators (financial and ridership) to set specific targets for, and monitor, transit system performance. This will help to ensure that efficient use is made of resources in order to maximize customer service and community benefits, and minimize subsidization (i.e. at least maintain or improve productivity – passenger rides/hour).
- Where financial objectives conflict with service objectives, seek to achieve a balance to provide the maximum benefits to the transit customers without creating an undue burden on the transit subsidy.

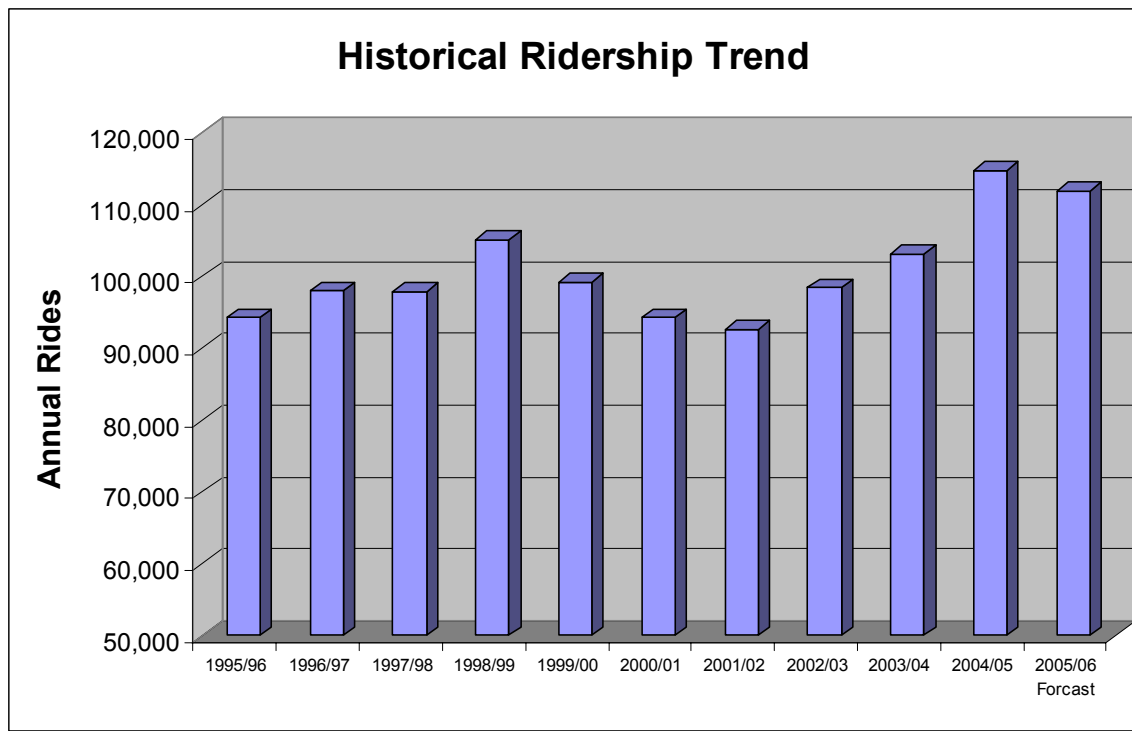
2.0 EXISTING SERVICE AND TRANSIT MARKET ANALYSIS

2.1 Conventional Transit

Dawson Creek Regional Transit operates two buses providing service from 7:30 am to 6:30 pm Monday to Friday, and 9:00 am to 6:30 pm on Saturday. Currently, there is no Sunday service. The system is comprised of 2 routes linking residential neighbourhoods of Dawson Creek with malls, major activity centres and Downtown. In the mornings, there are also two school special trips, linking the Northside neighbourhoods with the South Peace Secondary School and Central Middle school. The two routes operate every 30 minutes Monday to Saturday from September to June and hourly in July and August. The summer routing on the #1 Northside includes trips to Rotary Lake.

While the overall size of the transit system has remained constant since 1981, there have been a number of adjustments over time and the current configuration of routes was established in 1987. Appendix A provides a service history of the conventional transit system since its inception in 1981.

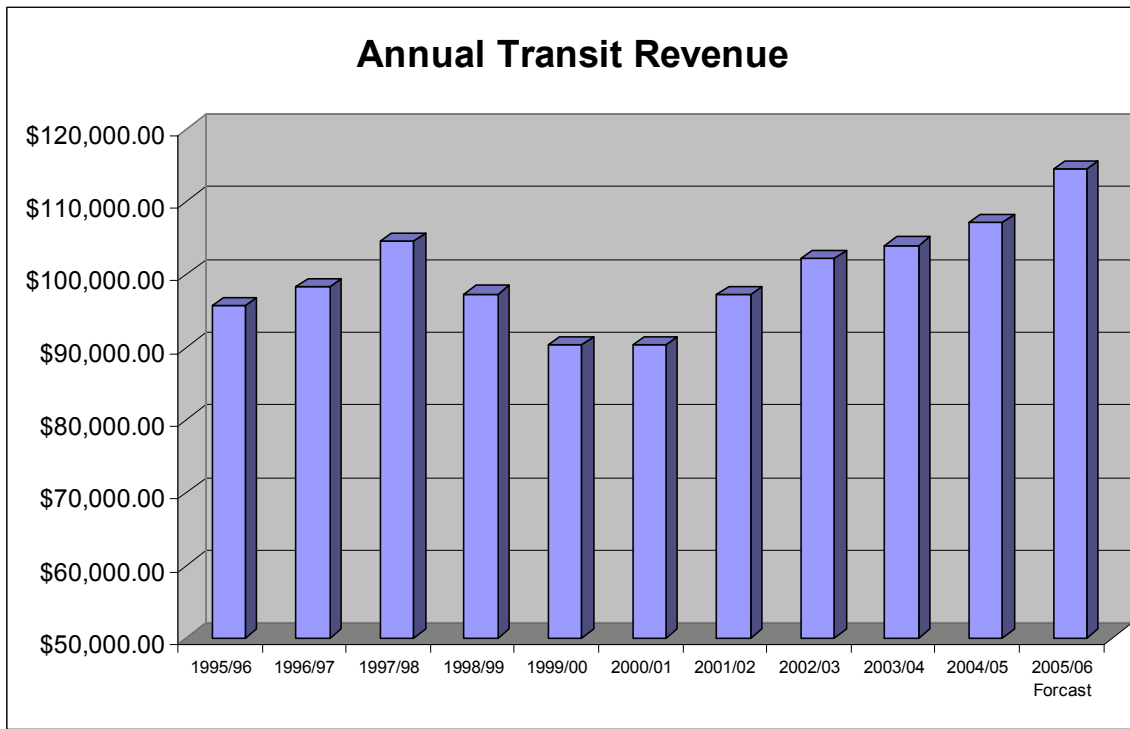
Ridership has fluctuated somewhat over the years, but since 1988 it has consistently remained in the range of 90,000 to 100,000+ as the following ridership chart of the last 10 years demonstrates:



Some of the growth, since 2002 when the School District #59 trustees voted to discontinue point-to-point busing of students, can be attributed to the adaptation of routes and schedules to bus students to school. The addition of service to Wal-Mart on the #2 Southside route in 2004 and the subsequent draw of shoppers has also had an impact on ridership.

In 2004/05 Dawson Creek transit carried 114,700 passengers, up about 10,000 passengers from the previous year. Based on the comprehensive count done in October 2005, ridership averages about 380 passengers on weekdays, and 200 passengers Saturdays. Detailed ridership data, obtained from the two-week passenger count is outlined in Appendix B. It is forecast that the Dawson Creek Transit System will carry approximately almost 112,000 passengers in 2005/06.

The following graph outlines transit revenues since 1994. Revenue has remained consistent with ridership over the twenty-four year history of Dawson Creek Transit. The average cost per ride over the past 10 years has varied little (low \$3.95, high \$4.89, average \$4.28).



Route Analysis

Total weekday ridership is fairly evenly balanced between the two routes. The #2 Southside carries more than 49% of the total weekday ridership, averaging over 250 rides per day or 28 rides per hour. The peak afternoon trip, at 2:45 pm, carries an average of 70 riders. This route services the South Peace Secondary and Central Middle schools, Northern Lights College, the Hospital, Wal-Mart and the Downtown area. The #1 Northside is slightly less busy, which carries 44% of the total weekday ridership, at an average of 24 passengers per hour or 230 per day. The peak time for this route is from 3pm to 6pm, as passengers return home from work and school. The 'School Special' trips make up the remaining 7%. Complete details of route and time specific ridership is outlined in the October 2005 passenger count in Appendix B.

Dawson Creek Conventional Transit Market (who rides the bus?)

Analysis of the Dawson Creek transit market is based on both the annual two-week passenger count carried out in October 2005 and two on-board passenger surveys carried out in November 2004 and June 2005.

Highlights include:

- Students represent the largest segment of weekday rides at 45%, followed by Adults (24.6%), BC Bus Pass holders (22.4%) and Seniors (8%).
- Most passengers use the bus for shopping, followed by school/college and work.
- The most popular destination is Downtown followed by Wal-Mart.
- 82% of all riders use transit at least 2 days a week with 47% using it at least 5 days a week.
- If public transit was not available, 46% of current riders would have to walk or stay at home.
- 79% of riders are satisfied or very satisfied with the current system.
- 59% of respondents requested more service including more frequent, later/earlier service (emphasis on late service), more Sunday/Holiday service and more school service.

Detailed results from the on-board passenger survey are outlined in Appendix C including specific cross-references based on passenger origin/destination. Specific markets include:

Commuters -- This market segment represents over 40% of all riders. These riders use the system to travel to college, school or work. Students make up almost one-half of this group.

Shoppers -- This group is a cross section of all passengers and make up 30% of all transit trips. Shoppers use transit from all residential areas to Downtown and Wal-Mart.

BC Bus Pass Holders -- This group represents over 20% of ridership during the weekdays and nearly half on Saturdays. These persons are generally a captive market and are the backbone of transit ridership in many BC medium sized transit systems. These riders use transit for most if not all their travel to shopping, medical and social/recreational activities. The BC Bus Pass Program provides a universal bus pass for low-income seniors and persons with disabilities which provides unlimited access on the Dawson Creek Transit System.

How Dawson Creek Transit Compares to Similar Communities

The following table summarizes 2004/05 performance statistics (actuals) for conventional transit systems in BC communities with populations or system size similar to that of the City of Dawson Creek. A complete program summary is attached as Appendix D.

Comparison to Similarly Sized Transit Systems Based on 2004/05 Actuals										
Community	Pop'n Served	# of Vehicles in Service	Annual Revenue Hrs.	Annual Rides	Total Revenue	Total Cost	Net Municipal Cost	Cost Recovery	Rides per Hour	Cost Per Ride
Dawson Creek	10,000	2	5,880	112,843	\$107,110	\$468,469	\$154,536	22.9%	19.2	\$4.15
Fort St. John	15,500	3	7,885	117,233	\$102,283	\$712,961	\$304,732	14.3%	14.9	\$6.08
Kitimat	10,100	5	11,898	174,068	\$185,789	\$929,734	\$373,001	20.0%	14.6	\$5.34
Kootenay Boundary	13,400	7	11,888	327,757	\$294,206	\$1,295,008	\$468,548	22.7%	27.6	\$3.95
Nelson	13,700	5	9,619	207,224	\$215,676	\$875,029	\$262,828	24.6%	21.5	\$4.22
Powell River	13,900	3	7,438	129,780	\$167,369	\$649,858	\$208,403	25.8%	17.4	\$5.01
Squamish	13,900	2	6,912	145,961	\$149,517	\$477,801	\$158,628	27.7%	24.3	\$2.73

As shown above, the Dawson Creek Transit System is the smallest of the Tier 3 systems. However, in comparison, its performance measures such as cost recovery, rides per hour and cost per ride are compared it is doing as well, if not better than, some larger systems on a per capita basis.

Conclusions

- Over 75% of the riders are satisfied with the system.
- Students make up the number one passenger group and should be viewed as a market to cultivate. (According to 2001 Census, the 0–24 age group accounts for 37% of the population.)
- The number one destination is the Downtown area, followed by Wal-Mart. It is anticipated that the already high demand for the #2 Southside may increase further with the development of the Multiplex near Wal-Mart.
- Over 45% of all transit clients have no other means of travel within the community.
- The most common comment/suggestion is for more late service and Sunday service.
- Overall system performance is within the average of similar sized BC communities.

2.2 Accessible Door-to-Door Transportation Service

History of Service

The City of Dawson Creek is currently the largest Municipal System in B.C. except for Whistler, which operates a conventional transit service without an existing BC Transit cost-shared custom transit or paratransit service. Historically, in the absence of the BC Transit/Municipally funded handyDART program, local non-profit societies and organizations struggled to operate door-to-door transportation services for seniors and disabled persons through grants and donations.

Initially, door-to-door service was operated by the Disabled Persons Society, with assistance from the South Peace Home Support Association. The service operated from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., 7 days per week, and reported transporting 25 people per day. Users of the service were seniors and persons with a disability who did not require wheelchairs and groups from Rotary Manor, Peace River Haven and Pouce Coupe Care Homes. Appendix E provides a history of the accessible door-to-door services operated in Dawson Creek by various individuals and organizations since 1982.

By 1989, the Disabled Persons Society operated 3 vans and employed one full-time driver and two part-time drivers. Vehicles were donated by the BC Lions and Variety Clubs while operating funds were raised through fares, grants from various programs such as Canada Works, Ministry of Labour, and, more recently, from gaming revenue.

Existing Door-to-Door Transportation Service

Step Up 'N Ride Society:

The existing service is currently provided by the Dawson Creek Step Up 'N Ride Society (previously known as the Disabled Persons Society) with the use of 3 aging, lift-qiipped vehicles: a 1995 12-passenger Ford bus, a 1997 7-passenger van, and a 1997 20-passenger bus. The average age of these vehicles is approximately 10 years old and each is reported to have registered about 300,000 kilometres.

The Step Up 'N Ride Society has been providing a very valuable door-to-door service to Dawson Creek seniors, children and adults with a disability who are unable to use the conventional transit system. The Society is very well received in the community and provides regular services:

- under contract with School District #59 (Peace River South) to transport about 50 children with disabilities to/from school and extra-curricular activities;
- under contract with the South Peace Child Development Centre (CDC) to transport between 50 and 75 disabled children per day to/from home and the CDC for preschool and Stepping Stones programs and recreational activities;
- to residents of Health Care Facilities such as Rotary Manor (includes an Adult Day Care centre), Peace River Haven and Pouce Coupe Care Homes who require transportation for medical specialist, rehabilitation and other trip purposes. Step Up 'N Ride Society managers are optimistic that the Northern Health Authority will be forthcoming with transportation funding assistance for these clients in the near future;
- to residents of Southview Supportive Housing (Intermediate Care);
- to seniors following surgeries/short-term hospital stays who require door-to-door transportation for Rehabilitation or Physiotherapy programs at hospital or clinics;
- to about 100 to 125 seniors (general public) with mobility issues who regularly use the service for a variety of trip purposes such as medical, shopping, banking, visiting etc.

Service is offered Monday to Friday generally between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Children's programs through the Child Development Centre and School District bussing are given priority for the morning pickup/dropoff (7:30am – 9am) and afternoon pickup/dropoff (3pm – 4:30pm) times. The Society operates this service from the Dawson Creek Home Medical Needs

business located at 1004-105th Avenue. The Society employs 3 full-time drivers and provides approximately 3000 passenger trips per month. Their operating budget is based on fundraising efforts, Gaming revenue, service contracts and passenger fares.

Fares are charged for the non-contract service to seniors with mobility issues and persons with a disability at a rate of \$4/stop within the City of Dawson Creek and \$5/stop for service to/from the Village of Pouce Coupe.

Through discussions with Society staff and based on service requests, it was noted that the largest unmet demand is primarily from members of the general public who are unable to use the conventional bus system and require door-to-door service primarily for medical appointments, shopping and visiting. This equates to a market group of approximately 125 seniors and people with a disability. A "Notice of Change to Services" was distributed by the Step Up 'N Ride Society in June, 2005 to inform members that, due to a lack of funding, there was no transportation available for the month of August, 2005. (A copy of this letter is attached as Appendix F.) **It was also noted by staff that the aging of the vehicles was also a challenge for the existing Step Up 'N Ride service.** Currently, the cost of a new vehicle is approximately \$165,000, amortized over 6 to 7 years for an annual cost of \$24,000.

Taxi Operator:

Yellow Cabs/AC Taxi & Delivery, operated by Ron DeWinter, is the only taxi company in Dawson Creek. Prior to the merger of Yellow Cabs with AC Taxi in 1996, Yellow Cabs had been operating since the mid-1940's while AC Taxi had been operating since the late 1960's.

The taxi service operates 24 hours per day 7 days per week with 16 vehicles, 3 of which are delivery vehicles. None of these vehicles are currently wheelchair accessible, however, through discussions with staff, it was noted that the owner has had previous interests in accessible transportation. Use of the taxis by seniors for medical and other trips is prevalent. The metered rate is \$3.10 plus \$1.82 per kilometer. It was reported that the company offers a 10% discount for senior citizens.

Summary:

Transportation for seniors and people with a disability in Dawson Creek is fairly well covered by the Step Up 'N Ride Society service and Yellow Cabs/AC Taxi, particularly for medical and education trip purposes. The largest unmet demand reported is for seniors and disabled persons who are not associated with the contracted services (i.e. CDC, School District, Northern Health Authority) who need transportation for shopping, personal errands, social trip purposes. This market group is estimated at about 125 people. Also, the Society has expressed concern regarding the aging condition of their fleet of 3 vehicles. The taxi service is well established and offers an affordable alternative for seniors for travel within town.

Options for augmenting the existing Dawson Creek Accessible Service

There are a few strategies that can be pursued to take advantage of existing services and enhance them through a combination of operator and user side subsidies. Based on the demand profile and the existing service types that are currently available in Dawson Creek, the following service options are presented:

1. Taxi Supplement Program

Taxi Supplement is generally a program that operates in conjunction with an existing custom transit or paratransit service and allows for some door-to-door trips to be dispatched to taxis when the custom transit vehicle is fully booked for a particular time slot. This program provides the Operator with flexibility in scheduling and contributes to improvements in efficiency and productivity for the system. Taxi supplement is a good way to increase capacity for providing door-to-door trips without taking the major step of adding an additional vehicle. It can also be used to provide trips at times when the custom transit service is not operating. This provides additional travel options for passengers. The cost per trip is generally lower than that for custom transit trips. This option could be accommodated within the existing administrative structure of the Step Up 'N Ride Society. It is estimated that \$24,000 annually, or \$2,000 per month of taxi supplement service would accommodate 3,000 rides within the City of Dawson Creek.

Taxi Supplement	
Operating Cost	\$ 24,000
Ridership	3,000

2. Taxi Saver Program

Persons with a disability would be eligible for this program. This is a popular program in many communities and allows for travel at times when other options are not available such as evenings, weekends and for spontaneous travel requirements. Taxi Saver is a program that allows eligible clients to buy taxi coupons at a discount for use on local taxis. The program was first launched in Vancouver in 1991 and is now available in about a dozen other communities in British Columbia. The coupons are subsidized at a rate of 50%. Thus, a book of coupons with a face value of \$60 is sold to eligible clients for \$30. Once the individual has a book of coupons, they contact the taxi service directly to book their ride. There is typically a limit on the amount of taxi coupons that an individual can purchase each month. It is estimated that 150 people would register for this service in the first year. A budget of \$40,000 (\$20,000 net) would accommodate 5,500 rides.

Taxi Saver	
Total Cost	\$40,000
Operating Cost (net)	\$20,000
Ridership	5,500

The one downside to the taxi options is the lack of an accessible vehicle. It is suggested that the City work with the local taxi operator to encourage the acquisition of an accessible vehicle. The capital cost of a ramp or lift-equipped minivan/taxi would likely be approximately \$25,000 for a used vehicle and \$55,000 for a new one.

3. **Additional van service**

This option explores the feasibility of adding a vehicle to the existing service provided by the Step Up 'N Ride Society. It is estimated that adding an additional vehicle plus 6 service hours/weekday would cost \$85,000. This figure includes some overhead office and dispatching costs, lease fees for a new vehicle at \$24,000 annually and 1500 hours of revenue service. It is estimated that the service would provide 4,500 rides. Based on traditional provincial cost sharing for custom transit services (66.69%) the local share (including debt service) would be \$28,313. The benefits of this option are that it would accommodate much of the unmet demand and contribute to improvements in both the productivity and quality of service. This option could be viewed as a longer term option. As demand continues to increase over time, then the addition of a fourth vehicle could be considered. On the negative side are relatively high costs and little improvement in the hours that service is available.

1 Vehicle Expansion

Service	5 days per week; 9am to 3 pm
Annual Hrs of Service	1,500
Total Cost	\$85,000
Fare Revenue	\$13,500 (\$3/trip)
Local Share (100% flex)	\$71,500
Ridership	4,500

Summary

The net operating cost of the options described above is estimated at a range between \$20,000 and \$71,500 depending on which options are selected. These options take into account the advantage of existing resources and provide a foundation for growth in the future. It is important to reiterate that the Step Up 'N Ride Society has noted their concern regarding the condition of their existing vehicles. As each of the three vehicles is about 10 years old, they will all need replacement in the near future.

As the City of Dawson Creek is aware, BC Transit does not currently have expansion funding to cost share in these services. If the City wishes to proceed, it will have to do so under a flex funding arrangement whereby the City pays 100% of the cost.

3.0 CONVENTIONAL TRANSIT SERVICE ISSUES

3.1 Immediate Service Adjustments

Through discussions with the Operator, it was noted that there are several bus stop locations in the City which require attention with respect to passenger access. Several bus stops currently have unpaved shoulder access. In addition to low-floor buses, a major element in the accessibility of the conventional transit service is the condition of the actual bus stop. Under the terms of the Master Operating Agreement, the responsibility for improving bus stops, including improvements to ensure accessibility, is with the local municipality. The City may wish to create a bus stop inventory on a convenient data base for easy access by the City and transit staff. This will aid in guaranteeing that stops are maintained and fixed in short order. Further, bus stops are one way of putting the City's "footprint" on the transit system. As an example, the City of Revelstoke has bus stop signs painted in colours unique to their City, which allows residents to associate transit as an integral part of their community.

3.2 Multiplex and New Hwy 2 Developments

Within the southeast sector plan, development includes a multi function facility that is currently known as the South Peace Multiplex. This new facility will be a major activity centre containing numerous activities including an Aquatic Centre, Events Centre and Agri-Centre located on Hwy 2 east of Wal-Mart, there is currently no transit service to the region. The closest bus stop is approximately 200 to 400 metres to the east at Wal Mart. It is anticipated that the Aquatic Centre will be operational by Fall 2007 and the Multiplex is slated for full operation by Spring 2008.

Proposal: To provide transportation service to this major activity centre and meet community needs for alternative transportation options, it is recommended that regular transit service be introduced. A new route is proposed that would link Downtown with the Multiplex on a regular 30 minute frequency. The Multiplex route would be one of two new southside routes. Both routes would travel south on 8th St. before routing to separate regions on 116th Ave. The two routes will provide a combined service of every 15 minute service to the commercial developments on 8th St., Dawson Mall and the most popular destination (other than Downtown) Wal Mart. Northern Lights College would also benefit with improved frequency.

The new Multiplex route will service Wal-Mart, Multiplex and surrounding neighbourhoods in the southeast region. The new Southwest route will continue to meet the needs of the present route as well as providing future routing options to the growth Area 2.

The new Multiplex service will attract several transit markets including Wal Mart shoppers and Multiplex users and staff, plus students, seniors and BC Bus Pass holders. It is expected that the new service would generate an additional 40,000 to 60,000 rides annually.

Dawson Creek Conventional Transit Expansion

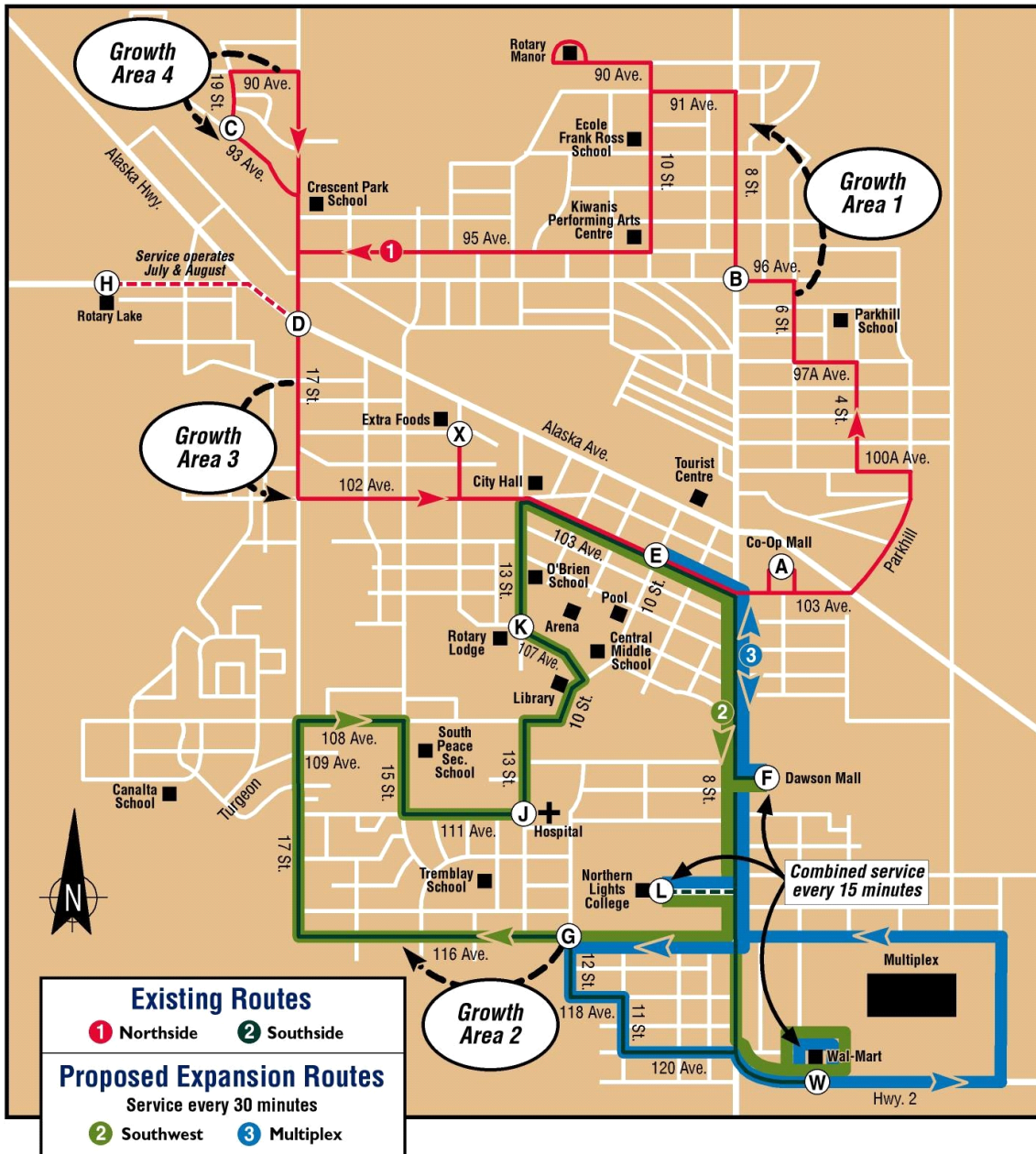
Multiplex Service Proposal	Additional Buses Required	Service Hours	Total Cost*	Additional Ridership**	Revenue Impact***	Local Share (Flex-funded)
One Additional Bus for Multiplex Expansion	1	3,473	\$262,692	55,568	\$55,568	\$207,124

*- Based on overall cost of \$68.44 per service hour (does not include total Vehicle Debt Service at \$39,000/yr)

**- Based on a range of 15 to 22 new rides per hour

***- Based on current fare structure

Dawson Creek Transit System Concept Expansion Plan



3.3 Evening and Sunday Service

As shown in the on-board passenger survey, approximately one in three riders commented they would like to see evening and Sunday service implemented in the future. These conclusions have been further reinforced by requests to City Hall and Dawson Creek Transit.

Of similar size communities (with conventional transit) only two operate during evenings and Sundays. The City of Nelson has historically operated evening and Sunday service since 1899 while Kitimat operates transit during evenings and Sundays, primarily to service Alcan Smelter's shift workers. Powell River operates evening service on Fridays only. Excluding Vancouver and Victoria, only Nelson, Kitimat, Nanaimo, Kamloops, Kelowna and Whistler operate Sunday service, each community having its own specific market demands, whether it be shopping, work or recreational.

Proposal: To address the needs of present and future transit markets, it is recommended that a pilot project be implemented to introduce evening service on Friday nights only. This service would operate for six months and then be evaluated. Should the service show promise, as it can take up to a year before any new service becomes established, then it could be extended for six more months. At the end of a year, the service would be fully evaluated and direction provided whether to continue or discontinue the expanded service. The cost of evening service expansion does not have the same impact as expanded daytime service because it does not require the expense of an additional bus.

The new Friday evening service would focus primarily on the shopping market with some emphasis on youth activities. It is expected that the new Multiplex will generate Friday evening riders. The following table outlines both a Friday only option as well as Monday through Saturday service.

Dawson Creek Conventional Transit Expansion						
Evening Service Proposal	Additional Buses Required	Service Hours	Total Cost*	Additional Ridership**	Revenue Impact***	Local Share (Flex Funded)
Friday Evening Only	0	204	\$13,962	3,468	3,468	\$10,494
Monday through Saturday	0	1,208	\$82,676	15,100	\$15,100	\$67,576

*- Based on overall cost of \$68.44 per service hour (does not include total Vehicle Debt Service at \$39,000/yr)
 **- Based on a range of 15 to 22 new rides per hour
 ***- Based on current fare structure

Future Considerations -- Sunday Service

Similar to Friday evenings, Sunday service will focus on providing basic service to shoppers, seniors and BC Bus Pass holders. Sunday service should be considered as an expansion within the next 5 years as the community develops.

Dawson Creek Conventional Transit Expansion						
Sunday Service Proposal	Additional Buses Required	Service Hours	Total Cost*	Additional Ridership**	Revenue Impact***	Local Share (Flex Funded)
	0	338	\$23,133	4,225	\$4,225	\$18,908
Total	1	3,473	\$262,692	55,568	\$55,568	\$207,124

*- Based on overall cost of \$68.44 per service hour (does not include total Vehicle Debt Service at \$39,000/yr)
 **- Based on a range of 15 to 22 new rides per hour
 ***- Based on current fare structure

3.4 Future Growth Areas

Dawson Creek has several areas identified for future residential development. These regions include:

Area 1: NE Quadrant – bounded by 6th St/97A Ave and city boundaries
Area 2: SW Quadrant – bounded by 13th St/116th Ave and city boundaries
Area 3: SW Quadrant – bounded by 17th St/100th Ave and city boundaries
Area 4: NW Quadrant – bounded by 20th St /89th Ave and city boundaries

At present all the identified areas for future development are in close proximity to regular transit service. Either the 1 Northside or 2 Southside provide regular 30 minute service to within 200 to 300 metres of new developments. However, as development continues, these new neighbourhoods will be located outside the reasonable walking distances of 300 metres.

Proposal: To introduce service to future growth regions it is recommended that in the early stages of development minor route adjustments be implemented to bring transit closer to new neighbourhoods. These minor route adjustments would not impede with the regular schedule. As development continues, further changes would be required to bring transit within easy access to all new regions. At this point, an expansion to the fleet should be considered. Additional hours and one additional bus would permit increased routing options and frequencies. For example, one additional bus (as well as providing service to the new South Peace Community Multiplex) would allow additional time within the schedule to serve all new areas with the same frequency.

Future transit markets include students, commuters and seniors. Routing details and stop locations will be finalized through the planning and construction phase.

3.5 Transit Fleet

The current Dawson Creek Transit conventional fleet consists of two 30 foot 1999 Dennis DART low floor buses plus a 1980 30 foot Orion I high floor. The older bus is only used as a spare. The current fleet plan has this older spare bus being replaced by a third Dennis DART thereby providing a consistent fleet. Overall public acceptance of the Dennis DART has been positive, however continued maintenance issues has put a strain on both operating staff and maintenance budgeting.

Since the new Dennis DART buses were introduced, the day in day out challenges of operating in the north has proved difficult. These challenges have also been experienced in a number of other communities across BC. Over the past 5 years BC Transit has implemented several programs to deal with these on-going and chronic maintenance problems, many of which have been resolved.

The Future: BC Transit is continually working with the operator and manufacturer to provide improved operation of the Dennis DARTS. Options to consider regarding the future of the fleet include:

1. Staying the course with continued support and improvements to reduce DART maintenance.
2. Replacement of the fleet with older high floor vehicles.
3. Develop strategies to review fleet needs with a longer range plan to replace the current fleet with a different style of vehicle to improve transportation options to better meet the community's needs. For example, a mixed fleet of smaller community buses together with new conventional buses with hybrid technology.

In summary, no one option is the solution. A combination of proposed options 1 and 3 will ultimately provide the solutions to the ongoing maintenance issues. BC Transit staff together with the local operator will continue to work on improving vehicle reliability and improving maintenance budgeting.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the Dawson Creek Transit Service Review is to provide a foundation on which to base future public transportation decisions. The report is intended to provide information and direction to municipal staff and elected officials to respond to present and future transit issues and service expansion requests.

Any service expansion is subject to local and provincial approval. Currently provincial funding is limited to existing core service levels. Municipalities may use the current flex funding system whereby individual municipalities contribute 100% of the cost to maintain or expand service levels. Based on a request from the City and an Order-in-Council, the formula for cost-sharing between the province and local municipality under the BC Transit Act can be amended to allow the municipality to contribute a greater share than defined in the regulations.

Recommendations:

- The proposal to introduce both the Taxi Supplement and Taxi Saver Programs be considered for approval. Total cost of the proposed combined taxi program service is \$44,000 with a local share (100% flex funded, net of revenue & taxi saver recovery) of \$33,000.

Taxi Supplement	
Operating Cost	\$ 24,000
Ridership	3,000

Taxi Saver	
Operating Cost (net)	\$20,000
Ridership	5,500

- Service expansion on a new #3 Multiplex route (operating on a 30-minute frequency Monday to Saturday) and associated service enhancements be considered for approval, subject to local funding. The table below summarizes the service expansion proposal options (including additional evening service) and associated costs for the Dawson Creek Conventional Transit System.

Dawson Creek Conventional Transit Expansion						
Service Proposal Expansion	Additional Buses Required	Service Hours	Total Cost*	Additional Ridership**	Revenue Impact***	Local Share (Flex Funded)
1. One Additional Bus for Multiplex	1	3,473	\$262,692	55,568	\$55,568	\$207,124
2. Evening Service Friday only	0	204	\$13,962	3,468	\$3,468	\$10,494
3. Evening Service Monday thru Saturday	0	1,208	\$82,676	15,100	\$15,100	\$67,576
4. Sunday	0	338	\$23,133	4,225	\$4,225	\$18,908
5. Expansion to Residential Growth Regions	1	3,624	\$273,027	59,796	\$59,796	\$213,231

*- Based on overall cost of \$68.44 per service hour (does not include total Vehicle Debt Service at \$39,000/yr)

** - Based on a range of 15 to 22 new rides per hour

*** - Based on current fare structure

Next Steps:

Should the City wish to proceed with the expansion plan for conventional transit, then a detailed service specification including a new public timetable will be prepared as well as a detailed description of routing changes. The current AOA budget, "Schedule C" will then be amended to include additional costs. At this point, the amended AOA will be presented to the BC Transit Board of Directors for approval and forwarded to the City for final approval. Should the City of Dawson Creek wish to proceed with the immediate Taxi Program options, BC Transit staff can assist with the administrative and marketing details to implement the program. The additional cost would be funded with a higher local percentage share (flex funding), which requires a one time "Order-in-Council".