

TRANSIT *future*

▶ *service plan*

Smithers & District

2026



Territorial Acknowledgement

We acknowledge with respect that BC Transit delivers our mission on the ancestral territories of Indigenous Peoples across British Columbia, and their historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

The Smithers and District Transit System is located on the unceded ancestral territory of the Gidimt'en Clan and the Wet'suwet'en people.

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

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01 Transit Vision

The Smithers and District Transit System provides key transportation services which are affordable, accessible, safe, and reliable to the communities of Smithers, Telkwa, Witset and the rural areas in between.

The Smithers and District Transit System is part of the sustainability goals of the communities it serves. Investment in transit services reduces greenhouse gas emissions and helps to make the community cleaner and greener.

The Smithers and District Transit System is an important part of the greater transportation network and works in tandem with active transportation, such as walking and cycling, and other modes of transportation.



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



Investment in transit services improves the sustainability of the transit network



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

Transit Vision

Town of Smithers Official Community Plan – Smithers 2040 (2022)

- Work with the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako to explore increase transit services and schedules.
- To support transit and active transportation as key modes of transportation is part of the guiding principles being decision making for transportation planning.
- Support the operation and development of Smithers Transit system. This includes ensuring there are comfortable and safe transit stops at key community locations.
- Encourage the development of new civic facilities, recreation facilities, senior/elder housing, Indigenous housing, housing for those experiencing homelessness or at risk, and supportive housing within walking distance of transit.

Smithers Community Energy and Emissions Plan (2021)

- Identified as one of the “Big Moves”, shifting beyond the car to promote active transportation and transit ridership and develop a zero-emissions transit network
- Optimize land use planning tools to enable compact community growth
- Promote transit ridership by offering free transit days and celebrating new routes. Ultimately explore universal free transit with transit providers.

Walk, Roll, Ride, Smithers Wide: Smithers Active Transportation Plan (2019)

- Continue to partner with BC Transit to strengthen the transit-active transportation nexus.

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 to ten years, the Smithers and District Transit System 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

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.

NextRide

NextRide was launched in 2022 in the Smithers and District Transit System 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.

BC Transit Corporate Initiatives

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

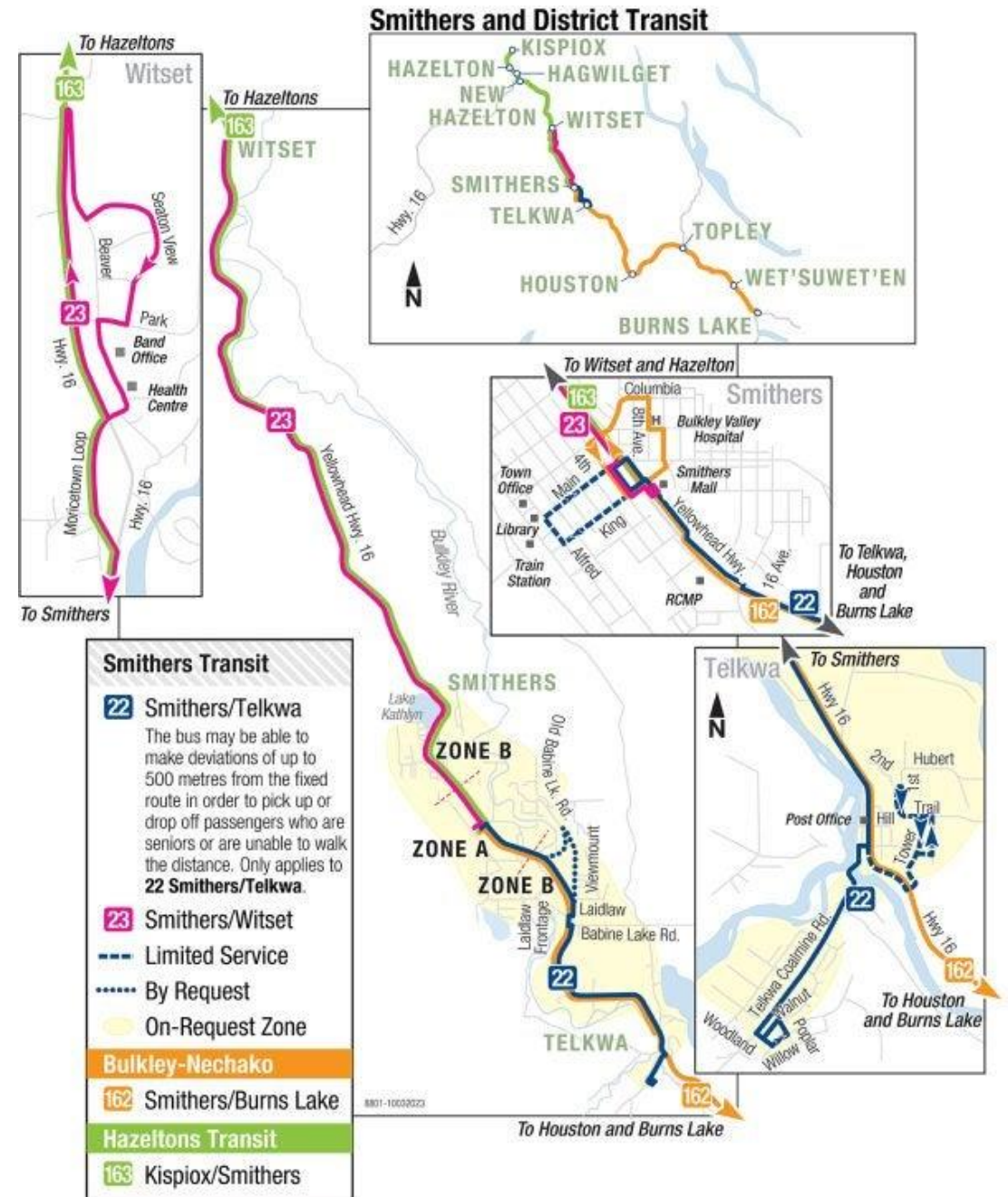
The Smithers and District Transit System consists of two conventional routes:

- 22 Smithers/Telkwa
- 23 Smithers/Witset

Route 22 connects Smithers and Telkwa with eight daily round trips Monday to Friday and four round trips on Saturday. Route 23 connects Smithers and Witset with two daily round trips Monday to Saturday.

In addition to the conventional transit routes there is also On-Request, curb-to-curb service within Smithers, Telkwa, and destinations in the regional district. Passengers are required to call ahead to book a ride. The On-Request service is offered during the day when the conventional routes are unavailable.

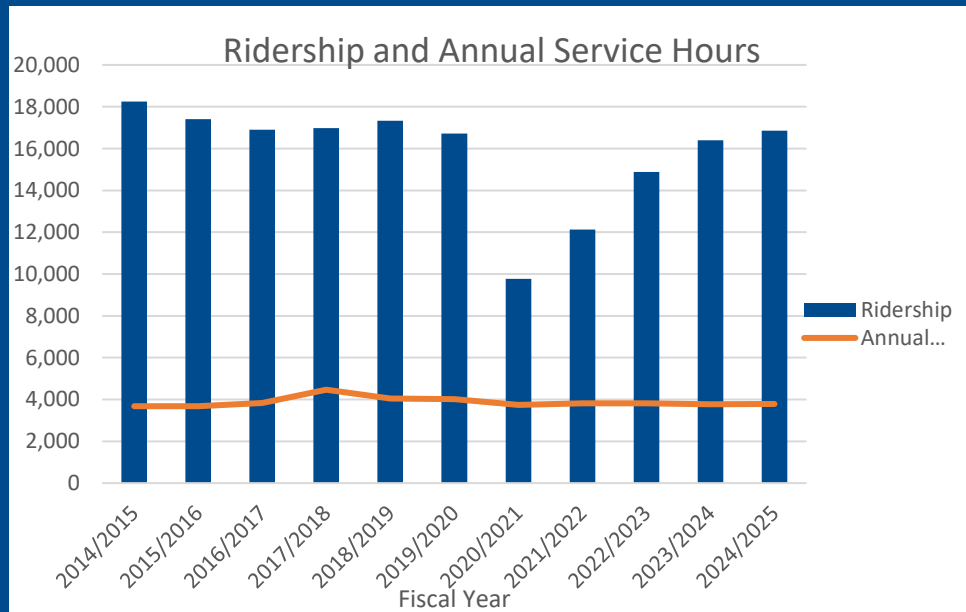
Other regional connections to Burns Lake and the Hazeltons are available through routes 162 Smithers/Burns Lake and 163 Smithers/Hazeltons. These routes were reviewed as part of the Highway 16 Transit Future Service Plan in 2023.



05 System Performance

Prior to COVID-19, ridership was stable at approximately 17,000 to 18,000 annual passengers. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic greatly impacted ridership, reducing it to a low of 9,800 annual passengers. Since 2020, ridership has started to recover but has not yet reached pre-pandemic levels. As of 2024/2025, annual ridership has nearly reached 17,000.

Over the last ten years the total amount of service hours has also stayed stable, with between 3,600 and 4,400 annual hours.

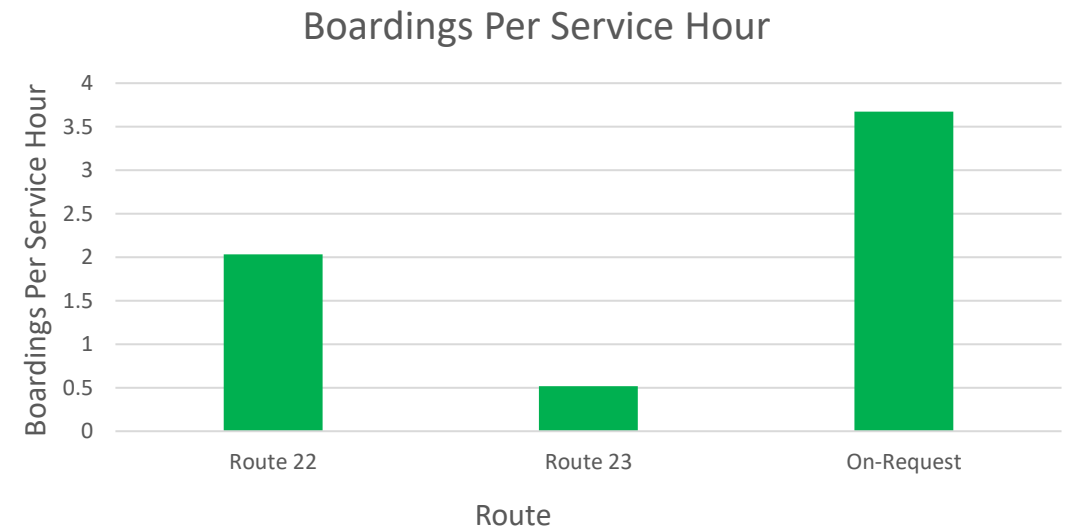
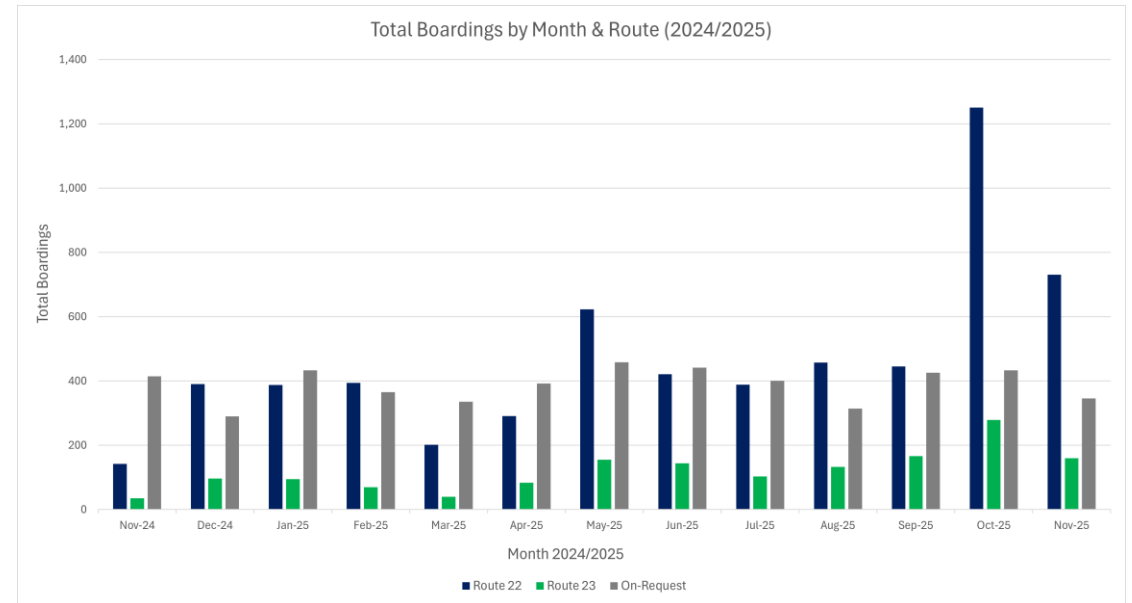


<p>-7.8%</p> <p>Ridership change, 2014/15 to 2024/25</p>	<p>16,800</p> <p>Annual Ridership, 2024/25</p>	<p>6 Days</p> <p>Service Mondays through Saturdays, excluding holidays</p>
<p>4.45</p> <p>Rides per service hour, 2024/25</p>	<p>3,800</p> <p>Annual Service Hours, 2024/25</p>	
<p>3</p> <p>No. of Fleet Vehicles</p>	<p>1.01%</p> <p>Commuting to Work Mode Share, 2021</p>	

06 Route Performance

Key Takeaways

- Route 22 Smithers/Telkwa and the On-Request service carry similar volumes of passengers, but as the On-Request service has less service hours, its Boardings per Service Hour performance is higher.
- Route 23 Smithers/Witset moves the lowest volume of passengers and has the lowest performance but also has the least amount of resources dedicated to it.
- There is little seasonal variation in ridership, with only small increases in the Summer and Fall months.
- The boardings on route 22 during October 2025 seems to be an outlier and not representative of typical trends in ridership.



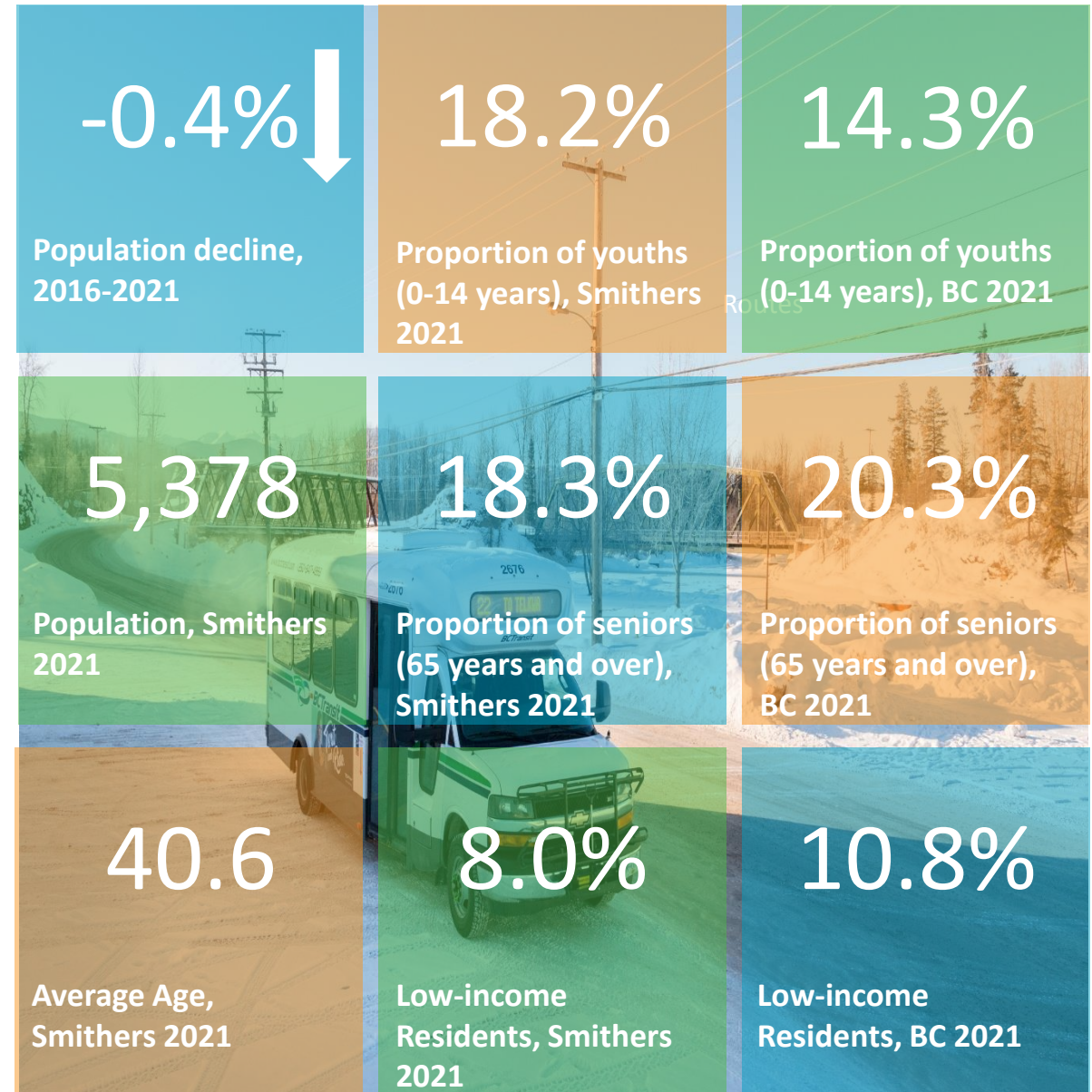
07 Transit Need

Between 2016 and 2021 census, Smithers decreased in population by 23 people.

Compared to the rest of British Columbia, Smithers 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. Promoting the free transit for youths 12 and under can make a big impact.



Source: 2021 Census, Statistics Canada

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 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 gains 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 on April 29 and May 1, 2025. 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 served as a central hub for project information and hosted a public survey to gather feedback from the broader community. The survey was open from July 17 to August 17, 2025.

3. Pop-Up Events: Two pop-up events were held on July 18 and 19, 2025, to engage with the public, share information about the TFSP update, and gather feedback to help inform the plan.

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



215 Page Visitors



149 Online Survey Responses



7 Paper Survey Responses



40 Pop-Up Participants



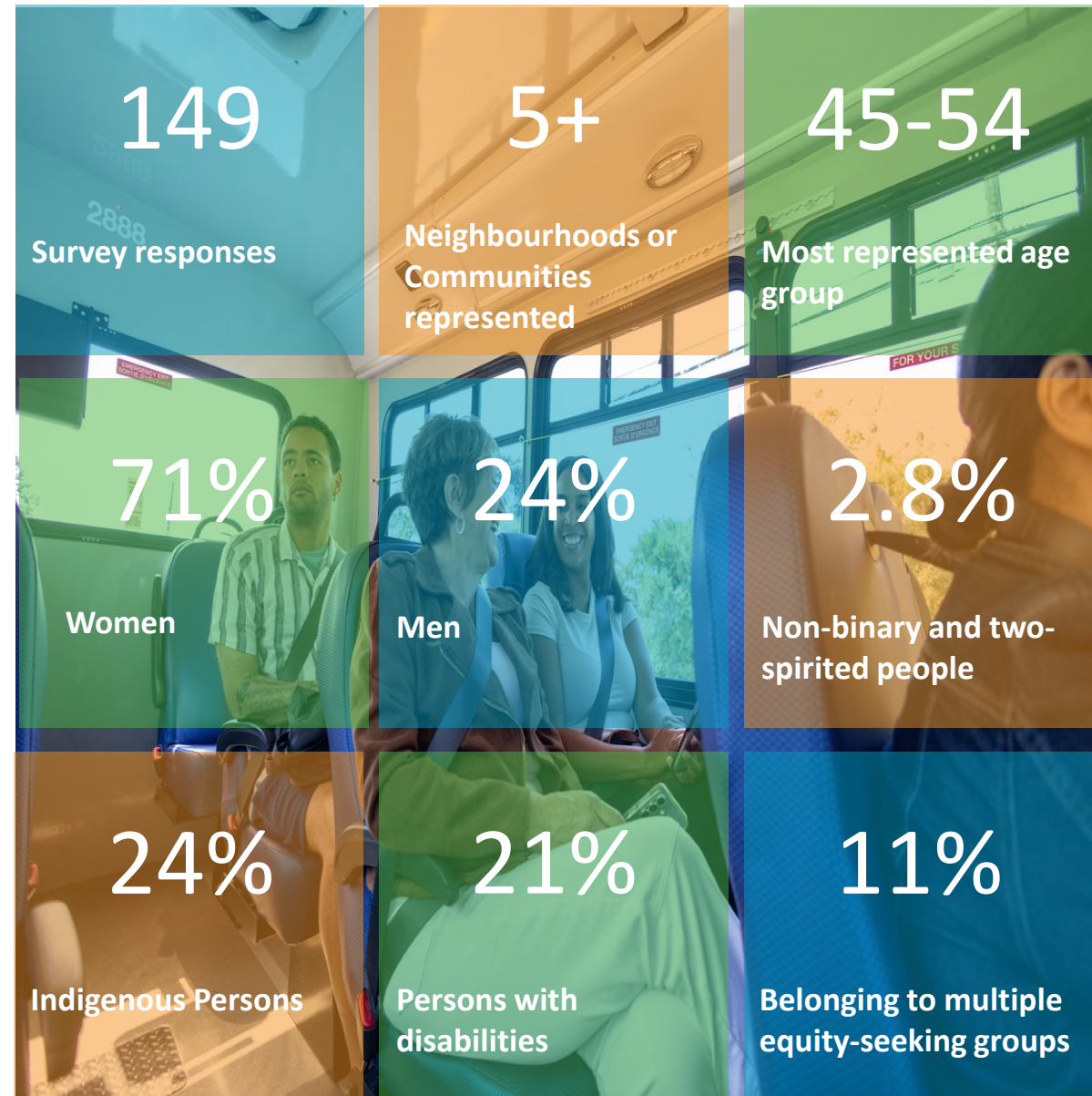
16 Workshop Attendees

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 Smithers and District, 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.

A total of 149 survey responses were received during the public engagement period, and the key findings on transit use are summarized below:

- Most respondents take transit for shopping, errands, and medical appointments. Work, recreational, and social activities were also frequently cited reasons for transit use.
- 32% of respondents were not transit users; 68% of respondents used transit with varying degrees of frequency. Almost 30% of respondents use transit multiple times a week.

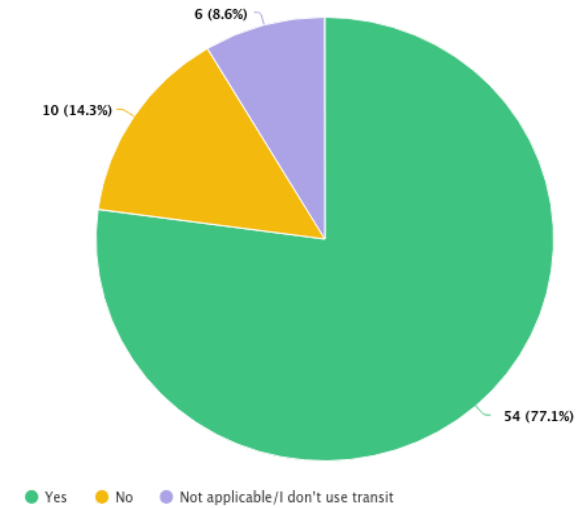


08 What We Heard

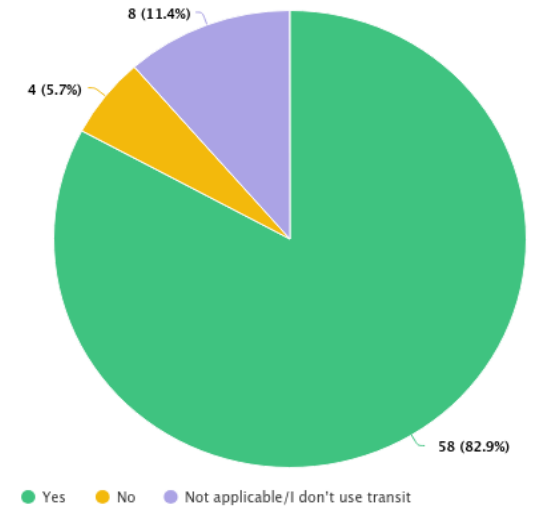
Key Themes from Engagement

- There was strong interest in expanding service hours, particularly during the midday and evening.
- Participants expressed significant interest in introducing Sunday and holiday service.
- Conventional fixed-route service was preferred over On-Request service.
- The main reasons respondents do not use transit are that it does not go where they need to travel and a preference for driving, walking, or cycling.
- Respondents suggested adding more bus shelters to make transit use more comfortable and convenient.
- Respondents expressed a strong desire for additional cycling infrastructure to better integrate biking with public transit.

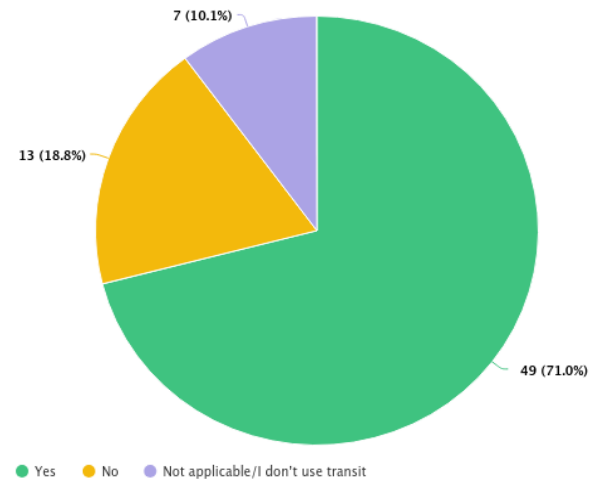
Adding service to approximately 9:00 p.m. on weekdays



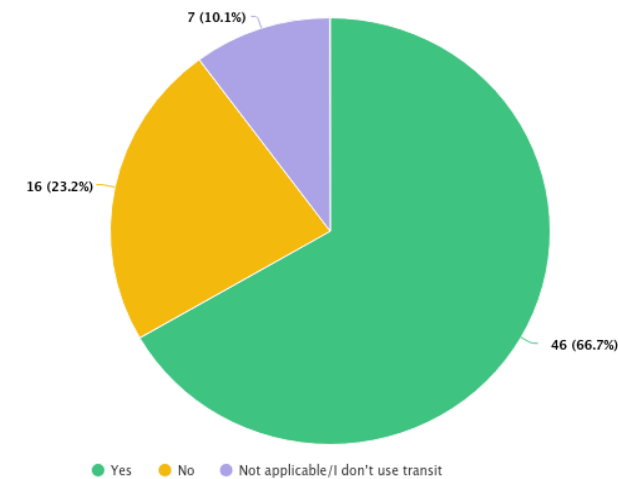
Adding midday service



Introducing Sunday service



Introducing holiday service



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 Wet'suwet'en First Nation 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

09 Smithers and District Service Priorities

Priority	Description	Expansion Resources
Improving midday service on 22 Telkwa	Converting the midday trip on route 22 to the variant that serves the Tower Road area.	75 annual service hours
Introducing Local Smithers Service	This priority introduces a new, flex-route for local Smithers transit services and converts route 23 into a flex-route service.	100 annual service hours
Extending service span later into the evening	This priority would extend the service span on route 22 and the local Smithers service to approximately 9:00 p.m. Monday to Saturday.	2,150 annual service hours and 1 bus
Introducing Sunday and Holiday service	Introducing transit service on Sundays and statutory holidays.	425 annual service hours

1. Improving midday service on route 22

The Tower Road area is only served by route 22 twice during the day; with the development of seniors' housing in the area there is a need for additional midday service in this area. This priority would add a trip both inbound and outbound to the Tower Road area on route 22, approximately at between 1:00 and 2:00 p.m. As this this variant of route 22 takes longer to complete, additional resources are required.

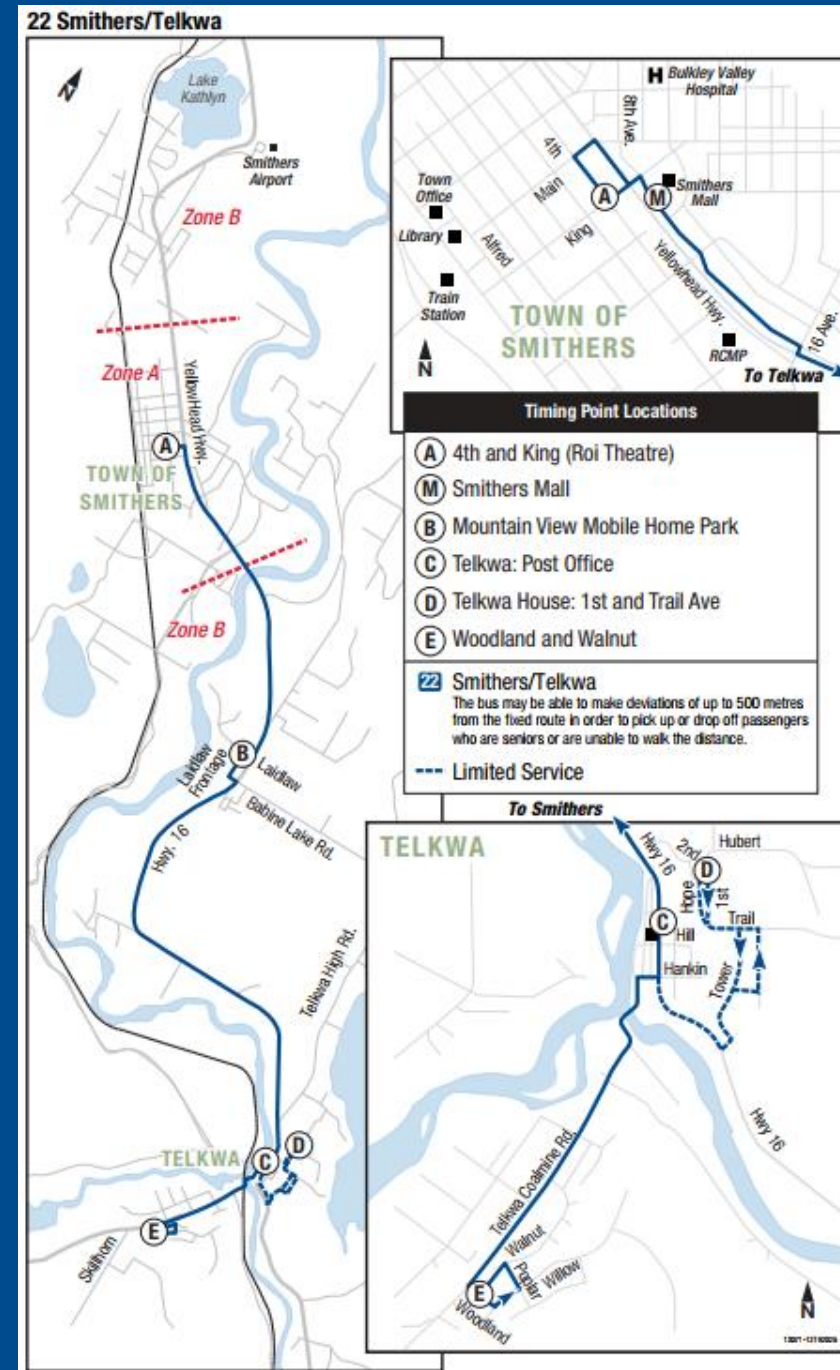
75

Annual service hours

0*

Additional Vehicles

*To be determined during the three-year improvement process

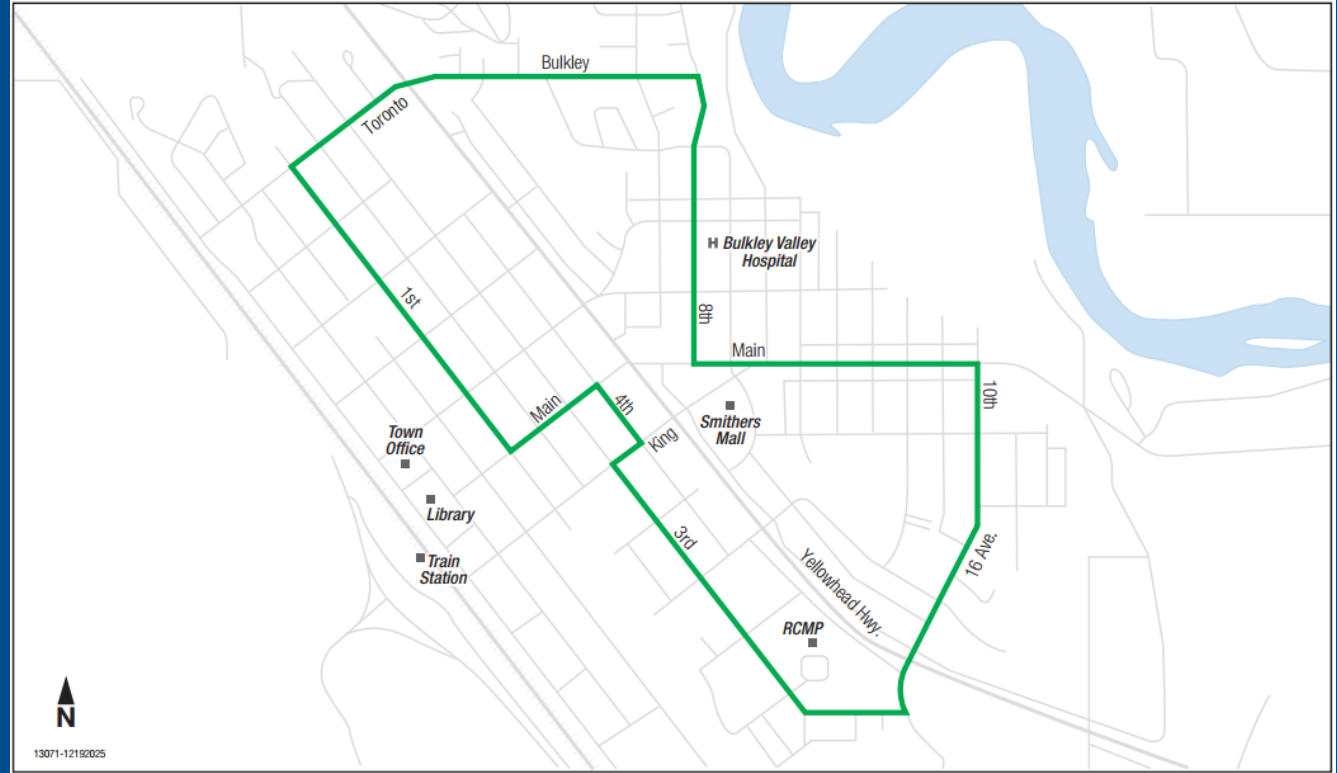


2. Local Smithers Service

To help improve the service within Smithers we're proposing a significant change in how we deliver transit service. This priority would change the current service delivery from a mixture of conventional, flexible routing, and on request transit services to system of flexible routes. As part of this change we'd introduce a new local route within Smithers and make both this new route and the existing routes 22 and 23 into flexible routes. With flexible routing, customers will be able to request the driver to deviate off route by up to 500 metres if required. This approach balances the desire for a more conventional and predictable transit system with the needs to provide tailored services sometimes.

OnDemand transit was also considered for this service, but based on public feedback, this option is being proposed.

Smithers Local



100

Annual service hours

0*

Additional Vehicles

*To be determined during the three-year improvement process

3. Extending service later in the evenings

The lack of evening service was identified as a barrier to transit use through the public engagement process. This priority would extend the service span on route 22 and the local Smithers service to approximately 9:00 p.m. Monday to Saturday.

Expansion	Annual Hours	Additional Vehicles
22 Telkwa/Smithers	775	0*
Local Smithers Service	1,375	1*

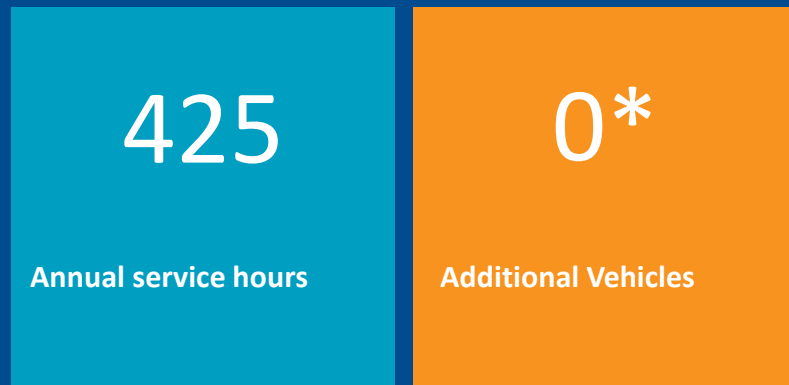


*To be determined during the three-year improvement process

4. Introducing Sunday and Holiday Service

This priority would introduce transit service on Sundays and statutory holidays. Sunday and holiday service would be the same as current Saturday service.

Expansion	Annual Hours	Additional Vehicles
Sunday service	350	0
Holiday service	75	0



*To be determined during the three-year improvement process

10 Infrastructure Priorities

Priority	Description
Invest in bus stop infrastructure	<p>Improving accessibility, safety and providing additional amenities at bus stops. Special attention should be given to improving bicycle parking and storage at or near transit stops. As there is limited capacity for bicycles on a transit vehicle, having access to safe and secure bicycle storage allows for more flexibility for multi-modal customers.</p> <p>Seek investment through capital planning and funding opportunities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transit Shelter Program• Transit Minor Betterments Funding

11 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 2,750 annual hours, which represents a significant increase in service.

The plan also calls for capital investments that include:

- An additional bus added to the transit fleet
- Improvements to customer amenities at transit stops



12 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 Smithers staff to ensure service improvements appropriately reflect local needs. Additional targeted engagement may be conducted.



13 Acknowledgments

Thank you,

The development of this Transit Future Service Plan provides the planning overview for the development of the Smithers and District 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:

- Town of Smithers
- Village of Telkwa
- Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako
- Smithers Community Services Association
- Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre Society
- Coast Mountain College
- Northern Development Initiatives Trust
- Ministry of Transportation and Transit

