



Transit Future Service Plan

Columbia Valley Transit System

January 2020

Regional District
of East Kootenay



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1 Introduction

The Columbia Valley Transit Future Service Plan outlines improvements for transit service and infrastructure over the next 3 to 5 years in the Columbia Valley Transit System. This Plan builds upon the Columbia Valley Transit System Long-Range Plan (2011) and includes:

- An evaluation of community changes that are impacting transit demand now and over the next five years;
- An update to priorities identified in the 2011 Long-Range Plan; and
- Identification of requirements to meet emerging transit demand in the near and medium term.

Transit Future Service Plans provide a number of defined service improvements for implementation over the next five years and ensure transit improvement priorities are consistent with evolving local priorities, emergent transit demands, and BC Transit's operational capacity. The Plan is informed by a public engagement process, analysis of the existing transit system, and feedback from local governments; in addition, it takes into account long-term planning documents for communities in the Columbia Valley area.

1.2 Plan Area

The geographic scope for this Plan is shown in the map below. The area encompasses the Village of Radium Hot Springs, the District of Invermere, the Village of Canal Flats and Regional District Electoral Areas F and G.

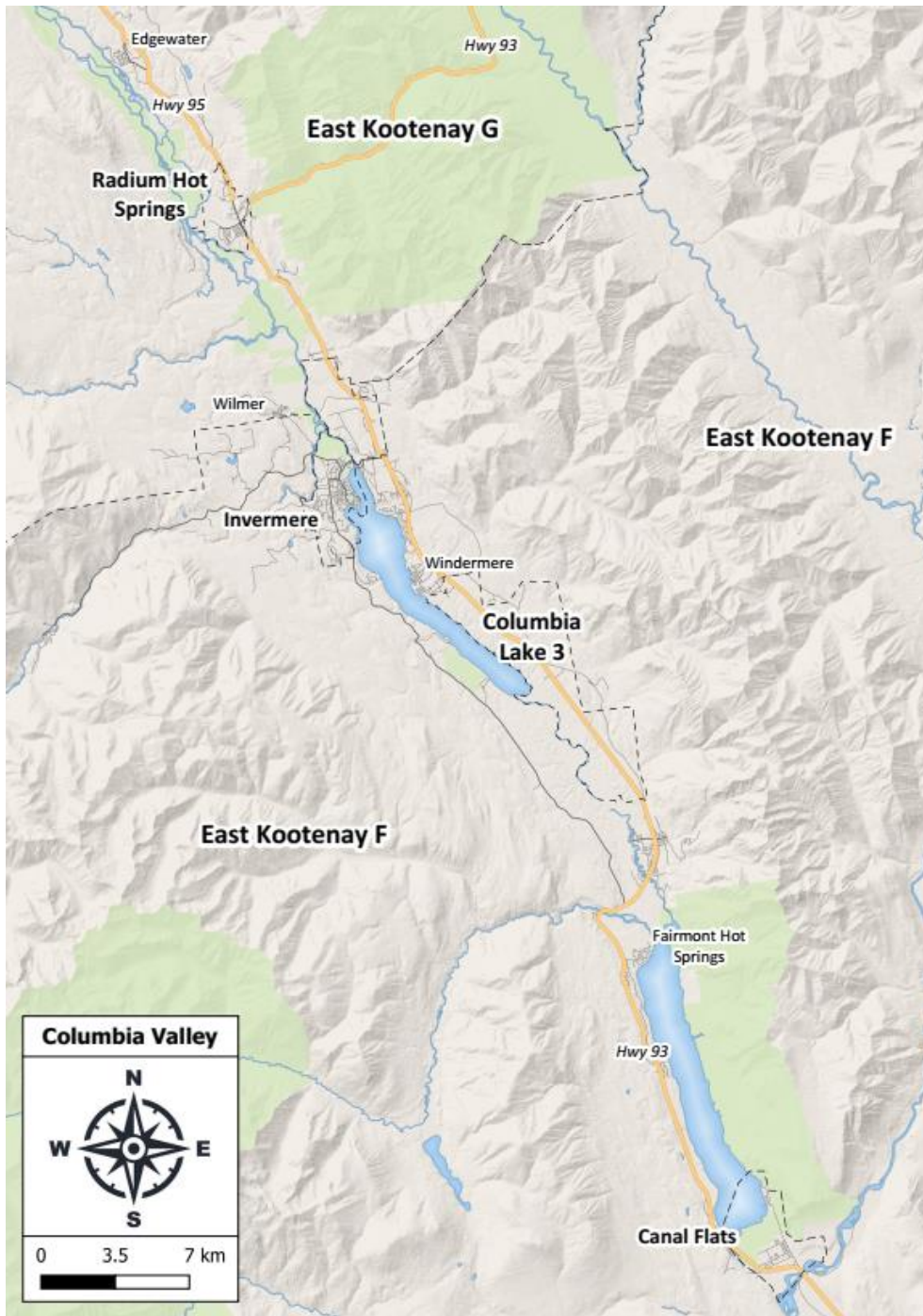


Figure 1: Plan Area

2 Plan Development

2.1 Timeline

Development of the Transit Future Service Plan began in spring 2018 and included phases to understand the present context, obtain feedback from both key stakeholders and the public, and develop a framework for short to medium-term development. Figure 1 illustrates the key steps in developing this Transit Future Service Plan.

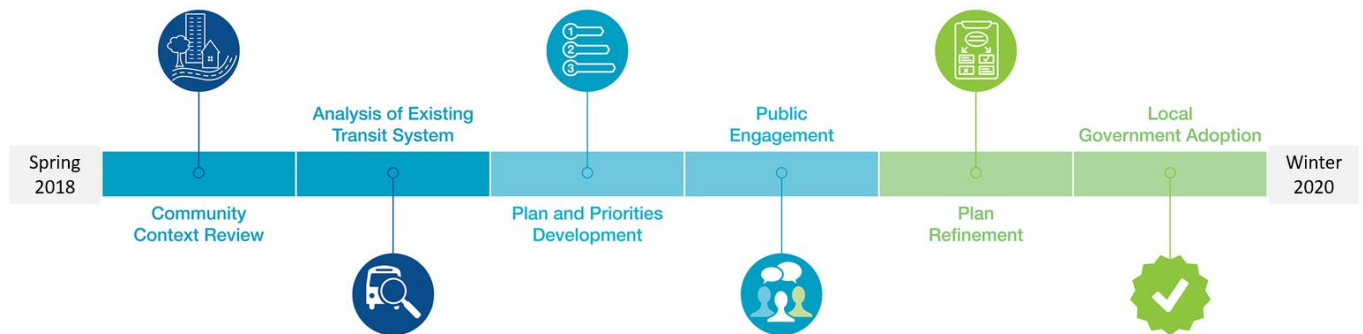


Figure 2: Timeline for the development of this Transit Future Service Plan

2.2 Informing the Plan

BC Transit has worked with staff at the Regional District of East Kootenay to develop this plan. It builds upon the Columbia Valley Long-Range Plan (2011), considers land use patterns and demographic trends, and incorporates public input.

The following efforts were carried out to inform the development of this plan:

- **Community Context Review:** Local planning documents and recent census data provided a high-level context of the area's demographics and land use patterns, including the Official Community Plans for the [Village of Radium Hot Springs](#), the [District of Invermere](#), and the [Village of Canal Flats](#).
- **Review of the Existing Transit System:** An evaluation of the existing transit system was carried out to identify the strengths and opportunities in the context of changing land use patterns.

- **Project Working Group:** The content, data collection and recommendations of this Transit Future Service Plan were developed in collaboration with a working group made up of staff from BC Transit, Regional District of East Kootenay, and Olympus Stage Lines - the contracted operating company.

3 Community Context

The following context was developed through public engagement, stakeholder input, a survey of relevant data and reports, and close examination of the existing transit system and current plans in the Columbia Valley. The following considerations provide critical opportunities and challenges to developing the Columbia Valley Transit System.

3.1 Population and Demographics

The total population of Columbia Valley increased by over 6 per cent between 2011 and 2016 to over 9,000. Columbia Valley has a median age of 49, with almost one quarter of its residents over the age of 65, which is above the Regional District average.

The Columbia Valley Transit System provides service to the following communities:

- The **District of Invermere** is a resort municipality, and the regional centre of the Columbia Valley, with a population of 3,391.
- **Windermere** is an unincorporated area in Electoral Area F, south of Invermere, with a population of 1,092.
- **The Village of Radium Hot Springs** is a resort municipality bordering Kootenay National Park with a population of 776.
- The **Village of Canal Flats** is the southernmost part of the Columbia Valley with a population of 668.
- **Edgewater** is an unincorporated community in Electoral Area G with a population of 529.
- **Fairmont Hot Springs** is an unincorporated community in Electoral Area F, with a 2016 population of 519.

3.2 Employment and Education

Due to its close proximity to Kootenay National Park, a large portion of employment is in the tourism and recreation industry. Forestry is the largest resource-based employer.

College of the Rockies is based in Cranbrook with campuses across the region including one in Invermere. College of the Rockies continues to grow enrolment of international students, who tend to rely on transit.

3.3 Land Use and Planning

District of Invermere Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 1495, 2015

The District of Invermere's OCP provides a vision for a sustainable and complete community by 2030. The following transit supportive policies are provided in Invermere's OCP:

- The District will encourage the interconnection of neighbourhoods through a transit link (Policy 2.21)
- The District will support initiatives to implement active transportation to promote accessibility, equity, health and well-being, environmental sustainability, personal and community safety and community cohesion and vitality (Policy 2.21)

Village of Radium Hot Springs Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 396, 2013

The Village of Radium Hot Springs' OCP provides a vision for a mountain village with a healthy range of services and amenities for a community of its size, with a range of demographic, income and housing options. The following OCP policies support the development of transit and pedestrian-friendly development:

- Support improved transit services that improve employment opportunities (Policy 3.11.3).
- Require new developments, including strata developments, to incorporate sidewalks or trail linkages, tree planting, and low-glare street lighting along roads and access routes to contribute to their visual appearance and pedestrian friendliness (Policy 5.2.3).

Village of Canal Flats Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 214, 2019

The Village of Canal Flats' OCP provides a vision for an affordable, family-friendly Village with diverse housing options, tourism and light industry development, and redevelopment of a work-live downtown. The Canal Flats OCP provides a number of policies supporting a vibrant and mixed-use village core.

3.4 Transportation

3.4.1 Health Connections

The Columbia Valley is served by a twice-weekly Health Connections service, operated by the same company as the transit system. This service is funded entirely by Interior Health, and provides service between Golden and Cranbrook. Priority on the bus is given to those people traveling for medical appointments.

3.4.2 Taxi Service

Columbia Valley Taxi is the only taxi company that provides service in the Columbia Valley, is based in Invermere, and provides service across the entire plan area.

3.5 Transit Context

3.5.1 Conventional Transit

The Columbia Valley Transit System was introduced in 2008 as a basic transit service for the Columbia Valley to provide access to services for all the region's residents. The system currently consists of 3,426 hours, two light duty ARBOC buses, and two routes that share a terminus at Invermere Hospital. Route 1 South Connector makes two round trips per day from Canal Flats to Invermere Hospital, stopping at Fairmont Hot Springs and Windermere in between. Route 2 North Connector is designed as a loop route between Invermere Hospital and Edgewater, with a stop in Radium Hot Springs in between.

A single vehicle operates both routes, effectively alternating throughout the day with periods of on-request service. The schedule enables residents of smaller communities to make day trips to Invermere. The service operates five days a week, with no service on weekends or public holidays.

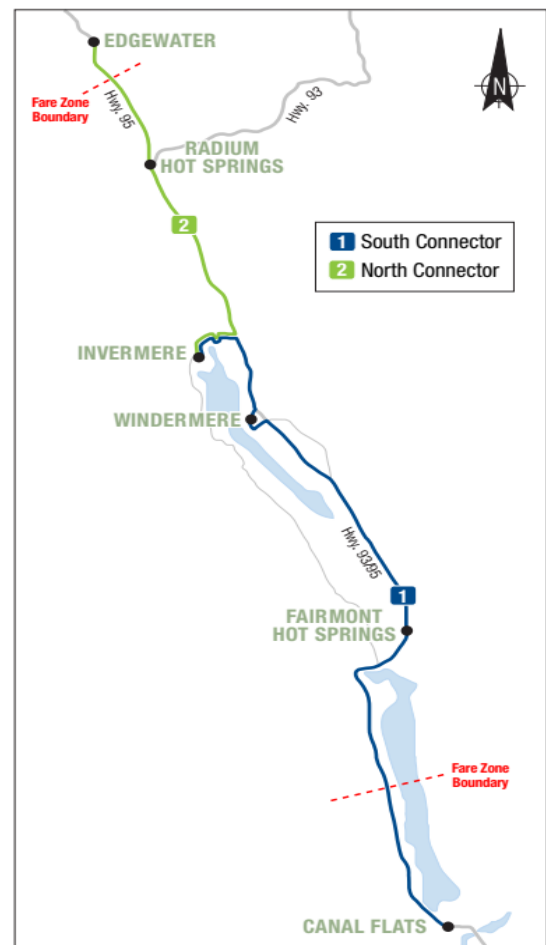


Figure 3: Columbia Valley Transit System

1 South Connector							To Invermere
Monday to Friday							
(J)	(I)	(K)	(H)	(G)	(C)	(A)	
Lv. Canal Flats	Hwy 95 and Fairmont Creek Road	Fairmont Lodge	Hwy 95 and Willis Road	Hwy 95 and Bench Road	Invermere Chamber of Commerce	Ar. Invermere Hospital	
7:15	7:34	7:39	7:43	8:00	8:05	8:15	
1:15	1:34	1:39	1:43	2:00	2:05	2:15	

1 South Connector							To Canal Flats
Monday to Friday							
(A)	(C)	(G)	(H)	(K)	(I)	(J)	
Lv. Invermere Hospital	Invermere Chamber of Commerce	Hwy 95 and Bench Road	Hwy 95 and Willis Road	Fairmont Lodge	Hwy 95 and Fairmont Creek Road	Ar. Canal Flats	
12:05	12:20	12:25	12:42	12:46	12:51	1:10	
4:35	4:50	4:55	5:12	5:16	5:21	5:40	

2 North Connector						To Edgewater
Monday to Friday						
(A)	(B)	(D)	(F)	(E)	(A)	
Lv. Invermere Hospital	Petro Canada	Radium Main Street East	Edgewater	Radium Main Street West	Ar. Invermere Hospital	
8:15	8:21	8:37	8:49	8:58	9:20	
11:00	11:06	11:22	11:34	11:43	12:05	
3:30	3:36	3:52	4:04	4:13	4:35	

Figure 4: Columbia Valley Transit System schedule

3.5.2 Ridership

Transit ridership has fluctuated modestly since 2009, with a notable decline between 2009/10 and 2011/12. Given that the region's population is growing, flat ridership numbers may be an indication that the transit system is not meeting the needs of its growing community, and there are opportunities to expand the service to meet new demand.

The financial investment has remained essentially constant over this time frame; the modest variation in service hours shown on the chart results from year to year differences in overtime wages and calendar schedules.

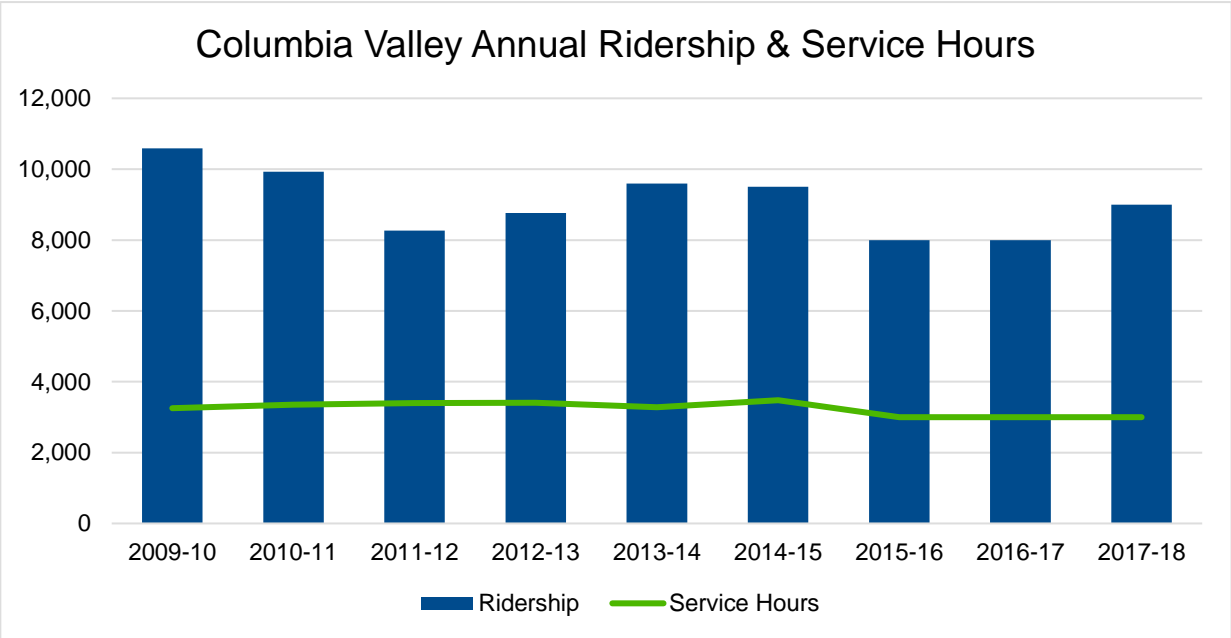


Figure 5: Columbia Valley Annual Ridership and Service Hours

3.5.3 Operational Considerations

Transit operations are currently based out of Golden, which requires over 100 kilometers of deadhead¹ in each direction. BC Transit recommends exploring options to reduce this deadhead in the future.

¹ Non-productive travel time when a vehicle is not in service

4 Proposed Transit Changes

This section discusses several possible scenarios for the future service design of transit in the Columbia Valley. At this stage, these recommendations are high-level proposals that may require further planning and analysis to determine specifics of routing, scheduling or stop placement. Resource requirements have been estimated for each option.

Proposed changes were developed in collaboration with the Regional District of East Kootenay and Olympus Stage Lines, and are based on results from engagement, detailed in section 4.2.

4.1 Service Design Options

4.1.1 Option 1: Edgewater and Radium Commuter Service

This improvement would introduce two additional round trips on Route 2 Invermere / Radium / Edgewater.

Benefits:

- Would provide more opportunities for commuters from Radium and Edgewater to get to and from work in Invermere

Considerations:

- Would not provide additional service to or from Canal Flats

Resources Required:

- 1,400 annual service hours
- 2 expansion buses

4.1.2 Option 2: Invermere Local Service

This option would provide a new local route within Invermere that operates 13 trips per day. This service would be in addition to the current service provided by Route 1 and Route 2. The proposed service could extend areas currently not serviced by transit, such as College of the Rockies and Wilmer.

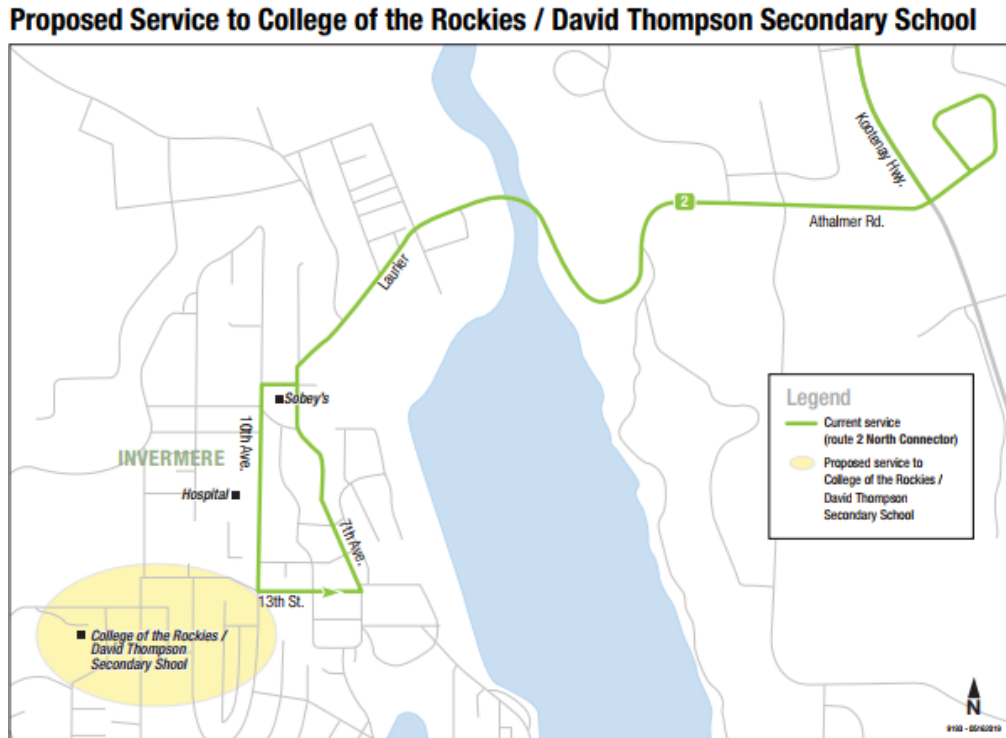


Figure 6: Proposed Service Area - College of the Rockies / David Thompson Secondary School

Proposed Service to Wilmer Area

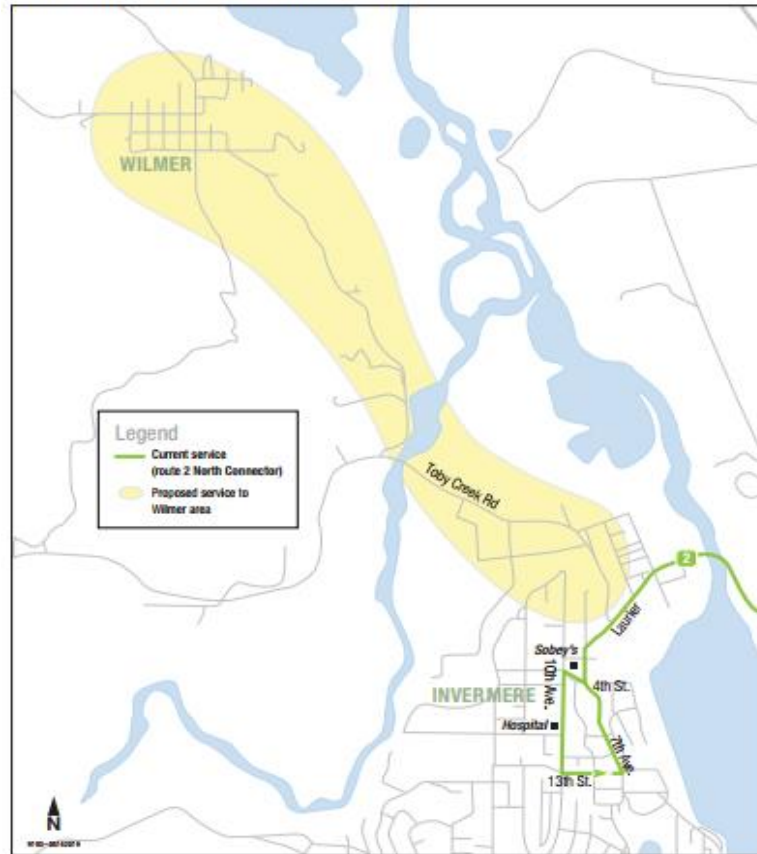


Figure 7: Proposed Service Area - Wilmer

Benefits:

- Would provide more opportunities to travel to key destinations within Invermere

Considerations:

- Providing service to areas currently not serviced by transit would require further engagement, as well as detailed planning and analysis to determine exact routing

Resources Required:

- 1,400 annual service hours
- 2 expansion buses

4.1.3 Option 3: Edgewater and Radium commuter and Invermere local service

Introduce two round trips on Route 2 Invermere/Radium/Edgewater, and introduce local service in Invermere that operates 13 round trips per day

Benefits:

- Would provide more opportunities for commuters from Radium and Edgewater to get to and from work in Invermere
- Would provide more opportunities to travel to key destinations within Invermere

Considerations:

- Would not provide additional service to or from Canal Flats
- Providing service to areas currently not serviced by transit would require further engagement, as well as detailed planning and analysis to determine exact routing

Resources Required:

- 2,800 annual service hours
- 2 expansion buses

4.1.4 Option 4: Introduce weekend service

Replicate current weekday Route 1 and Route 2 service on Saturday and Sunday.

Benefits:

- Would provide opportunities to take transit to work, recreational activities, etc. on weekends

Considerations:

- Would not provide additional service for weekday commuters

Resources Required:

- 1,400 annual service hours
- 2 expansion buses

Table 1: Summary of Proposed Transit Changes and Resources Required

Proposed Service Improvement	Est. Service Hours	Expansion Buses
Option 1: Edgewater and Radium commuter service	1,400	2
Option 2: Invermere local service	1,400	2
Option 3: Edgewater and Radium commuter and Invermere local service	2,800	2
Option 4: Weekend service	1,400	2

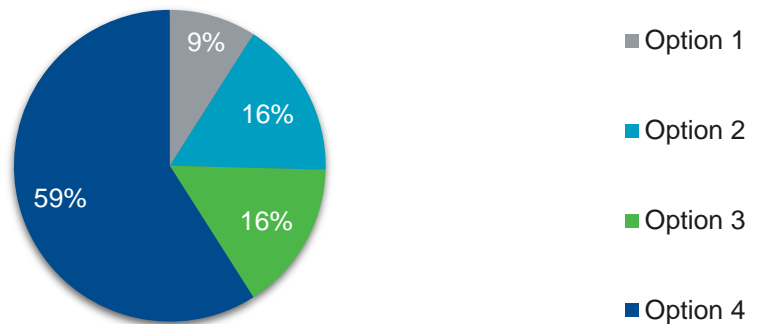
4.2 Public Engagement Results

An online survey was carried out during the summer of 2019, which presented the above options for transit service improvements. A total of 141 respondents participated in the survey.

Both transit users and the general public indicated a strong preference for weekend service. A local Invermere service was identified as a second preference.

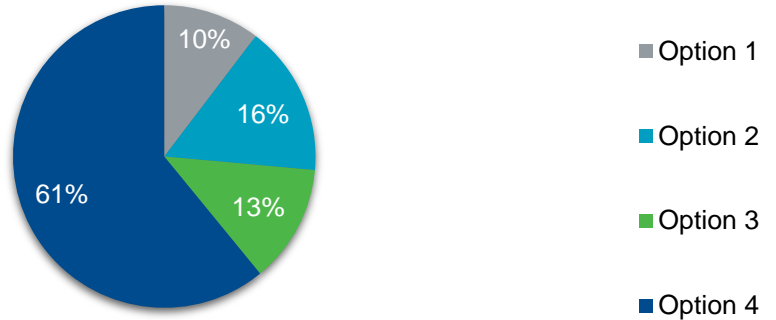
All Respondents

Which service improvement option would be most beneficial for you?



Transit Riders

Which service improvement option would be most beneficial for you?



4.3 Implementation Priorities

The following section details an implementation strategy over time for short to medium-term transit service improvements. The implementation plan prioritizes improvements in accordance with local government, stakeholder and public feedback.

4.3.1 Transit Service Priorities

Table 2: Implementation Priorities for Proposed Transit Changes

Implementation Priority	Service Hours Required	Buses Required
1: Implement weekend service	1,400	2
2: Expand local Invermere service	1,400	2
3: Expand Edgewater and Radium commuter	1,400	2

4.3.2 Infrastructure Priorities

There are a limited number of bus stops in the Columbia Valley Transit System. In the future, additional bus stop amenities such as shelters and benches should be considered for each community in the transit system.

5 Next Steps

This plan outlines several service options for future transit service improvements. Service improvements will be integrated into the three year Transit Improvement Process (TIPs), which is updated on an annual basis. Prior to implementation of service changes, BC Transit staff will work with staff at the Regional District of East Kootenay to ensure service improvements appropriately reflect local needs. Additional targeted engagement may be conducted.

It is recommended that the Regional District of East Kootenay:

- Receive this report for information; and
- Prioritize weekend service on routes 1 and 2 for any future expansion initiatives.