
SUBJECT: BC TRANSIT PARTNER SURVEY

The purpose of this report is to provide the Commission with the results of the 2012/13 BC Transit Partner Surveys. This report is presented to the Commission for **INFORMATION**.

BACKGROUND

BC Transit is committed to strengthening our communications and partnerships with our local governments partners. In our continued effort to better understand the issues that are critical to the success of our partnerships, BC Transit contracts with CivicInfo BC to undertake annual partnership surveys.

In February and March 2013, CivicInfo BC administrated the third annual BC Transit management performance surveys: The BC Transit Questionnaire for Chief Administrative Officer and the Local Government Survey for Staff Person Responsible for BC Transit

Both surveys were sent to all local BC local governments and regional districts with respondents asked only to reply if their local government is served by BC Transit, and not Translink. Survey results are shared with BC Transit partners, and are available for review online at civicinfo.bc.ca by participating CivicInfo BC members

DISCUSSION

Participation level for the surveys are improving. There were 43 local government's participating in the Staff Person Responsible for Transit Survey, up from 37 last year, and 49 local governments participating in the CAO Survey, up from 42 last year. Local governments participating from within the Capital Regional District also increased to 8 from 7 last year.

Survey results have been improving. This year local government staff rated the overall service they received from BC Transit as 3.77 out of 5, up from 3.22 and 3.06 in the two prior years.

As well, 61% of respondents rated the service they received from BC Transit over the past year as good or very good, which is up from 32%. While only 5% responded that the service had declined, compared to 15% the year prior.

BC Transit appreciates the participation in the survey from our local government partners. We are committed to continuing to improve our level of communication on key issues raised in the survey. The complete results of the surveys for all BC Transit regions are presented in the attachments of this report.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Commission receives this report for INFORMATION.

Respectfully,



Manuel Achadinha
President and Chief Executive Officer



CivicInfo BC

Local Government Staff & CAO BC Transit Surveys

May 2013

Local Government Partnership Surveys

Two surveys are administrated annually by CivicInfo BC:

- BC Transit Questionnaire for Chief Administrative Officer
- Local Government Survey for Staff Person Responsible for BC Transit

Distribution & Review:

- Both surveys are sent to all local BC governments and regional districts.
- Both surveys ask for response only if your local government is served by BC Transit, and not Translink.
- Survey results are shared with BC Transit partners, and are available for review online by participating CivicInfo BC members

Participation:

- Number of Local Government Staff Respondents was 43
- Number of Local Government CAO Respondents was 49
- Includes 8 local governments within the Capital Regional District



Highlights – Local Government Staff

Improving results year over year

- 3.77 average rating out of 5 for service received from BC Transit
 - last year this number was 3.22, and 3.06 previous year
- 61% of respondents rated the service they received from BC Transit over the past year as good or very good
 - last year this number was 32%
- While only 5% of respondents rated the service they received as poor or very poor
 - last year this number was 15%
- No respondents indicated that the service they received this year either declined or greatly declined when compared to the service they received last year
 - last year this number was 9%

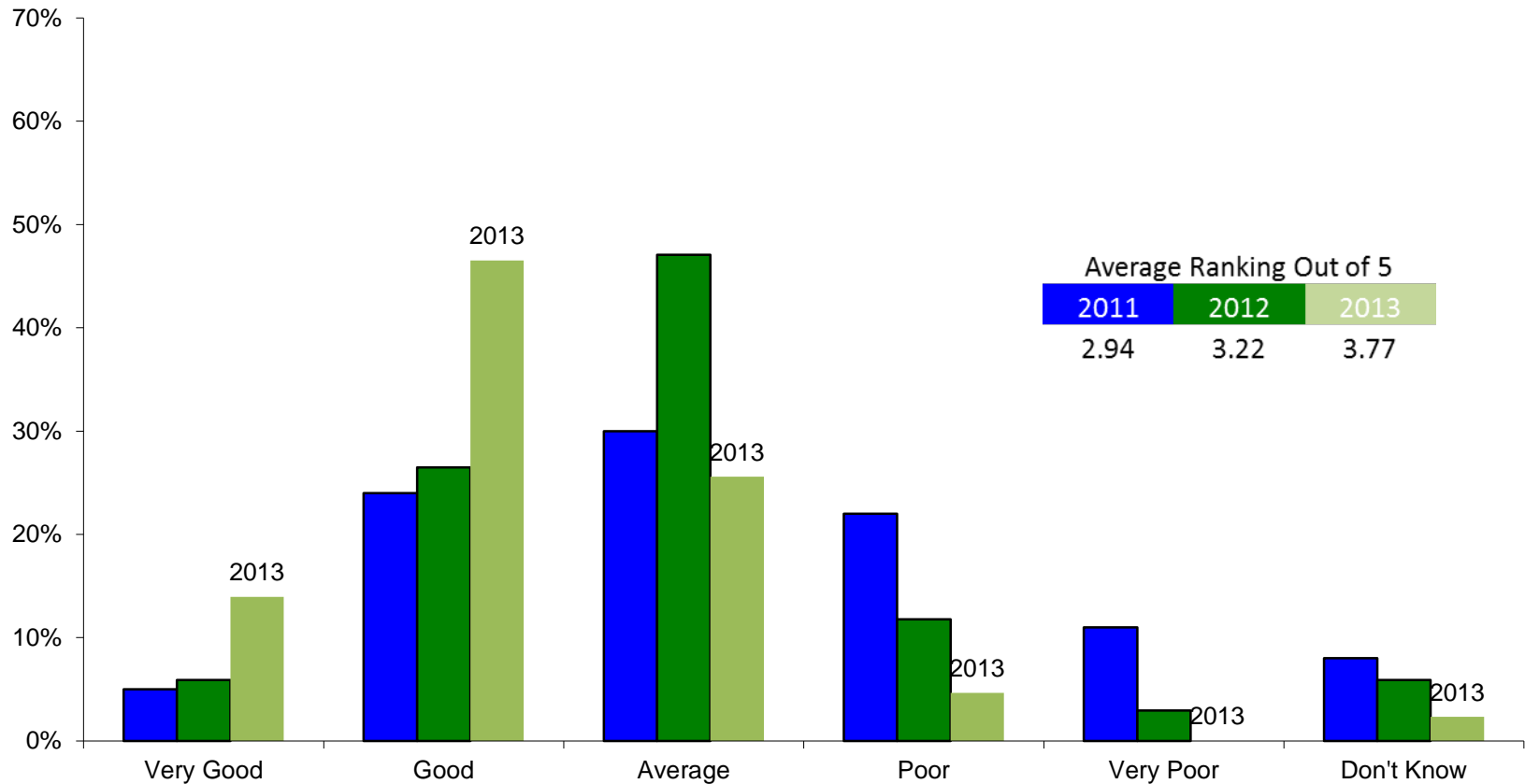


Notable changes from last year

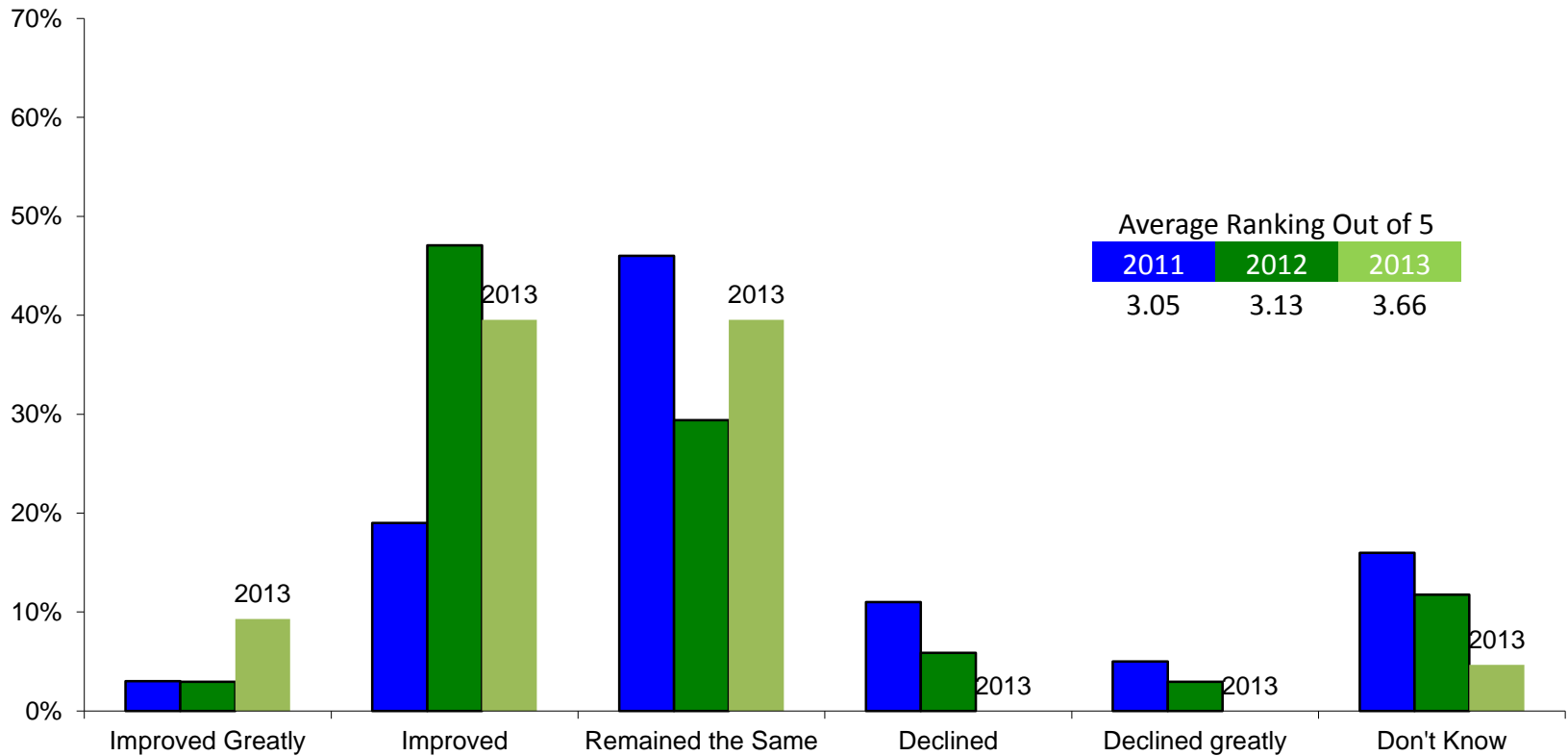
- The general trend toward good & acceptable service levels.
- Improvements over last year were greatest in:
 - Day to day support for operating & technical issues
 - Management of contracts & agreements
 - Support for fare structure & revenue development
 - Communication with local partners on transit specific issues
 - Short & long range scheduling support
 - Provision & support for transit infrastructure
 - Finance monitoring & reporting
 - Efforts by your regional transit manager
- Noteworthy improvement in new vehicle, vehicle moves, vehicle management & maintenance.



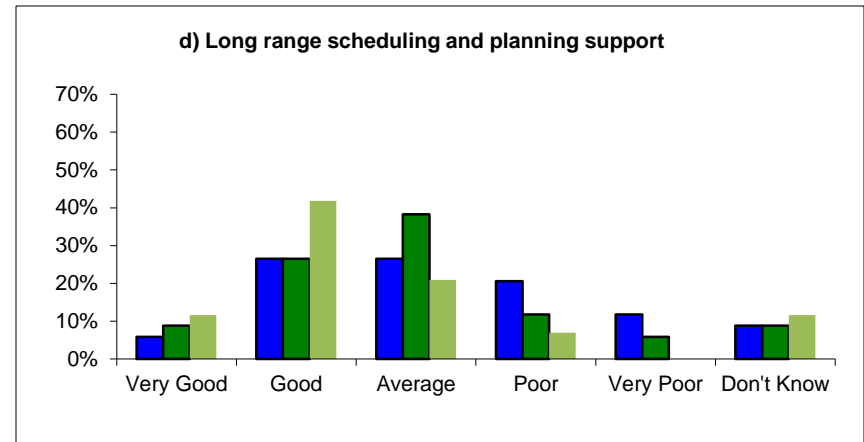
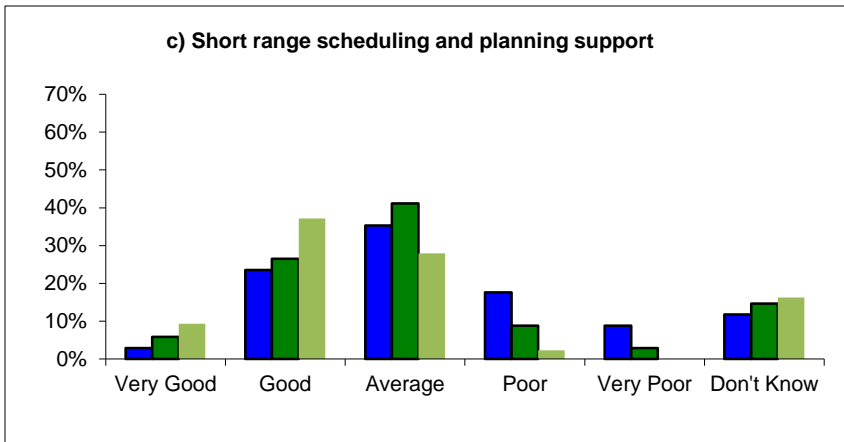
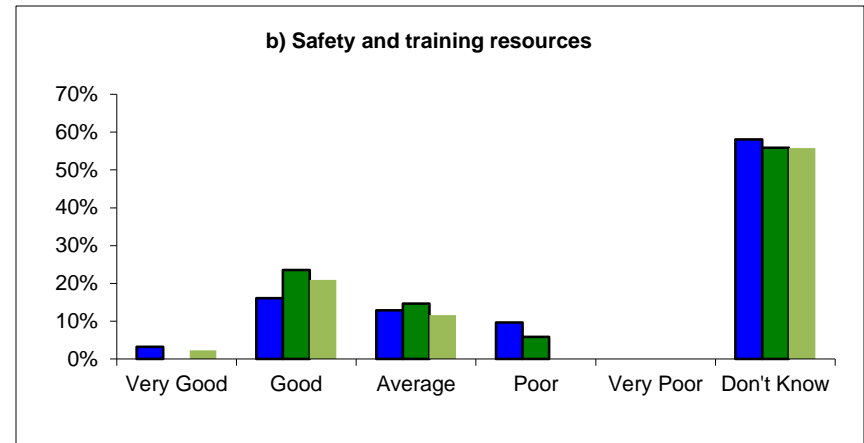
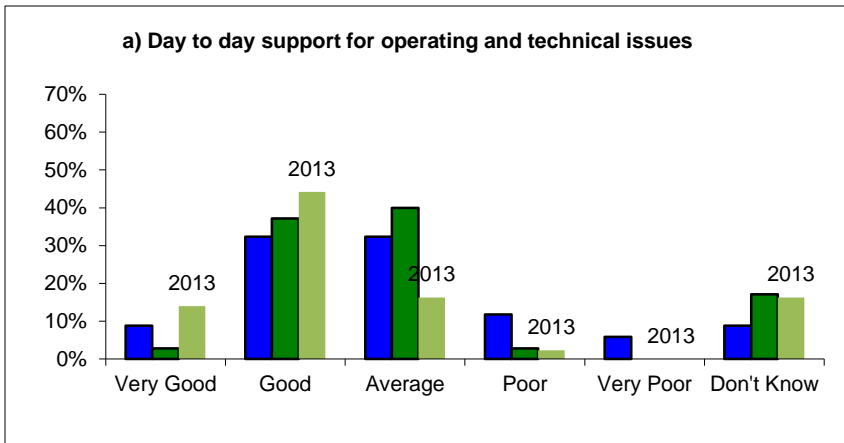
Overall how would you rate the service you have received from BC Transit staff over the past year?



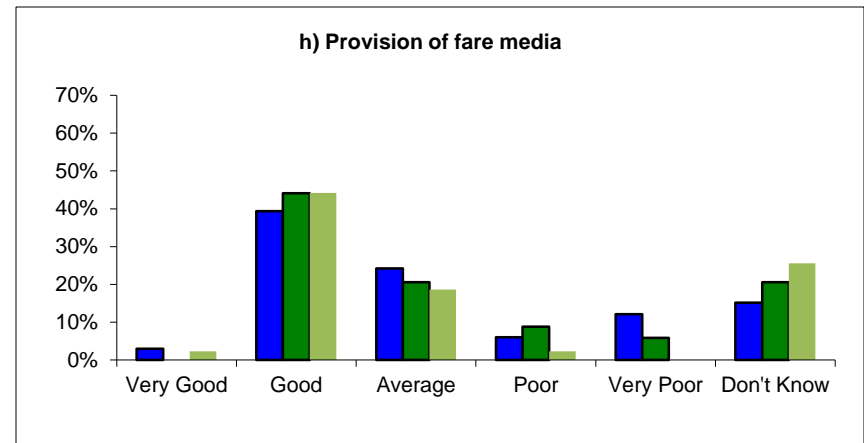
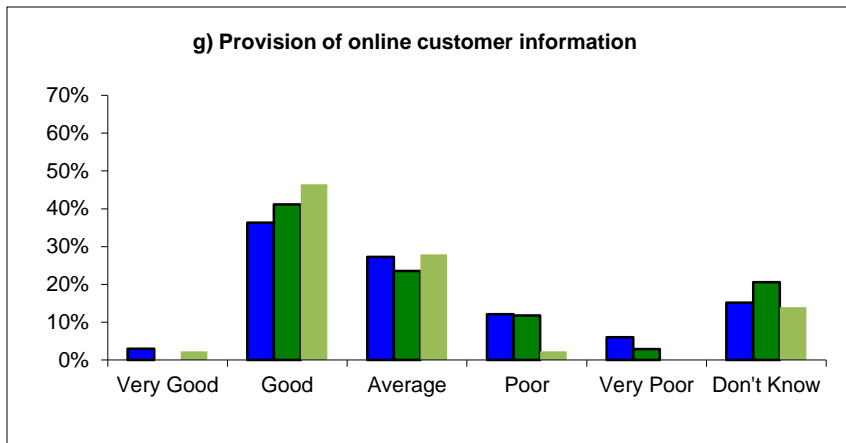
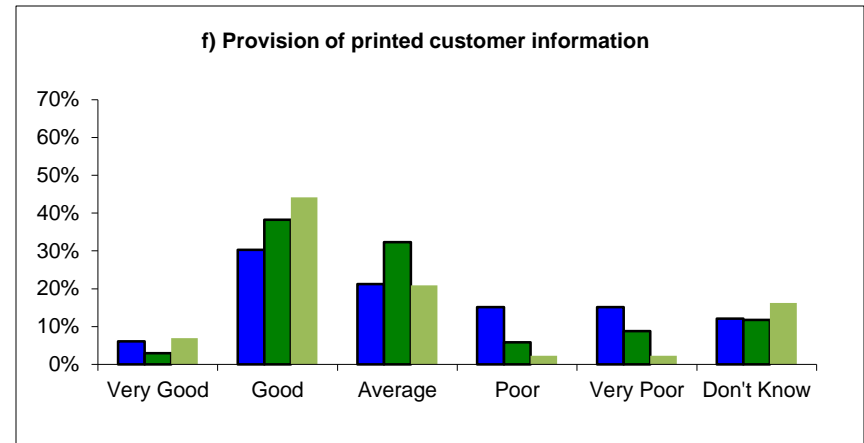
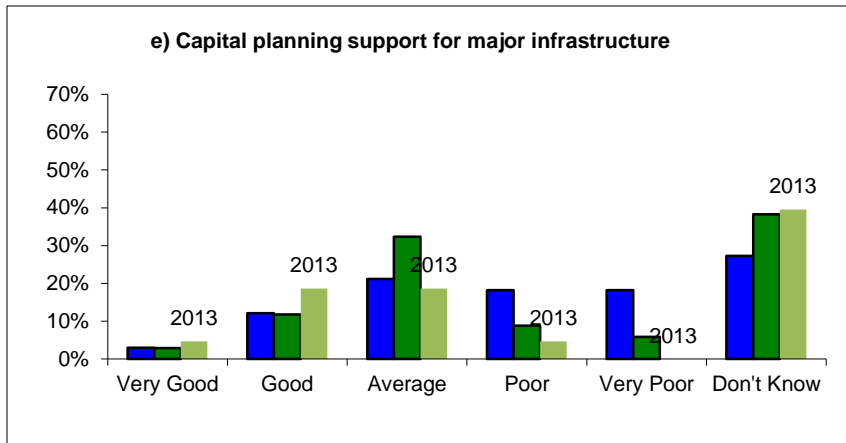
How would you compare this year's service to the service you received last year?



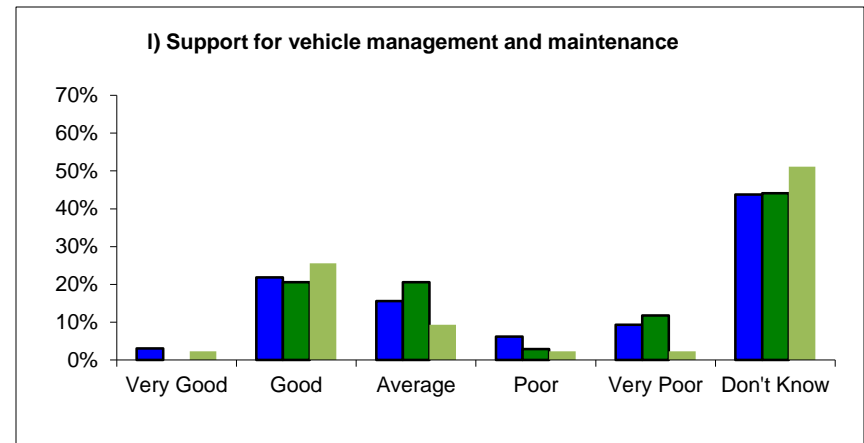
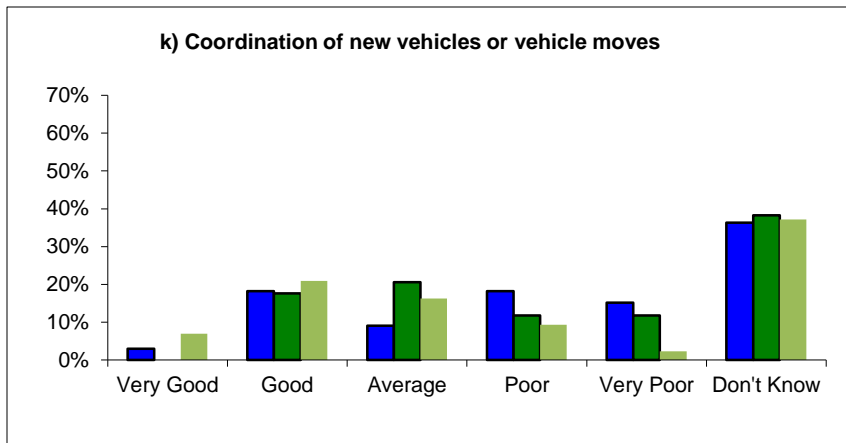
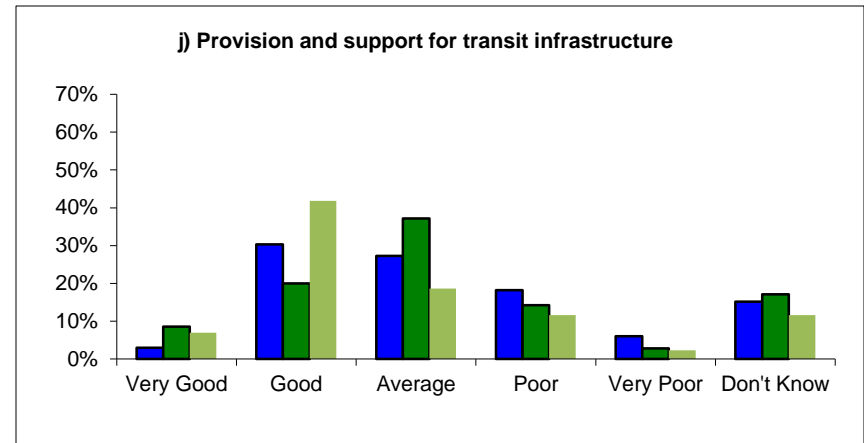
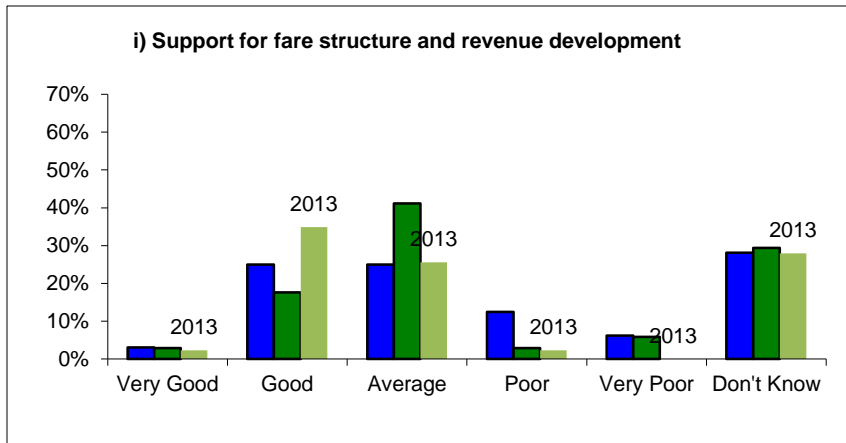
How would you rate the service you received from BC Transit for the following functions:



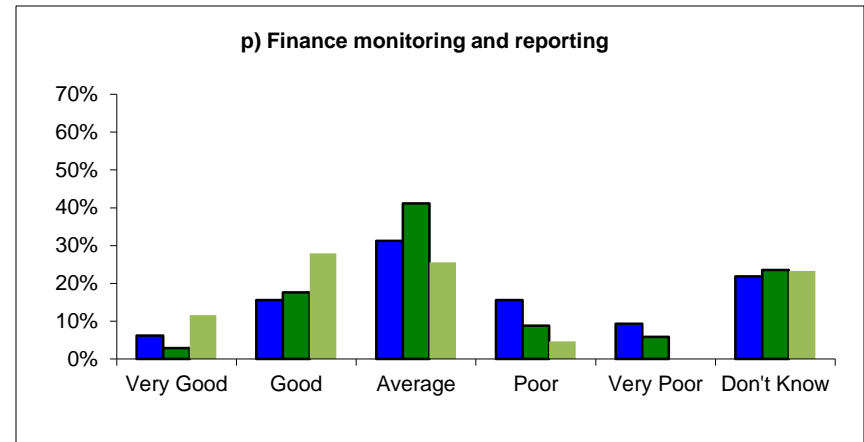
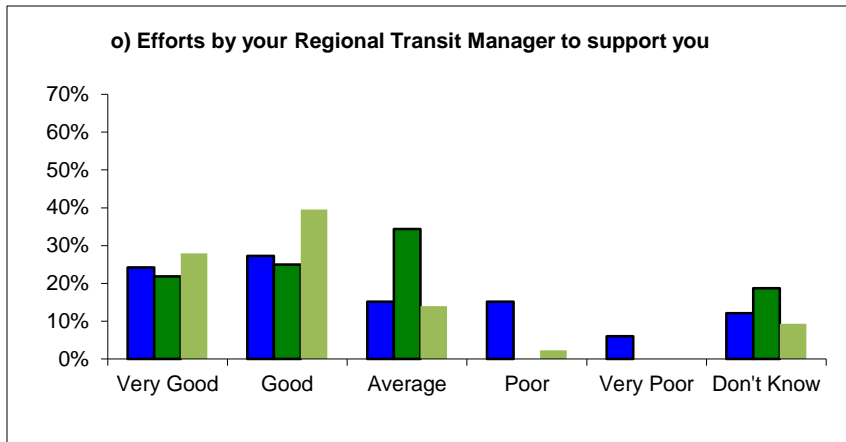
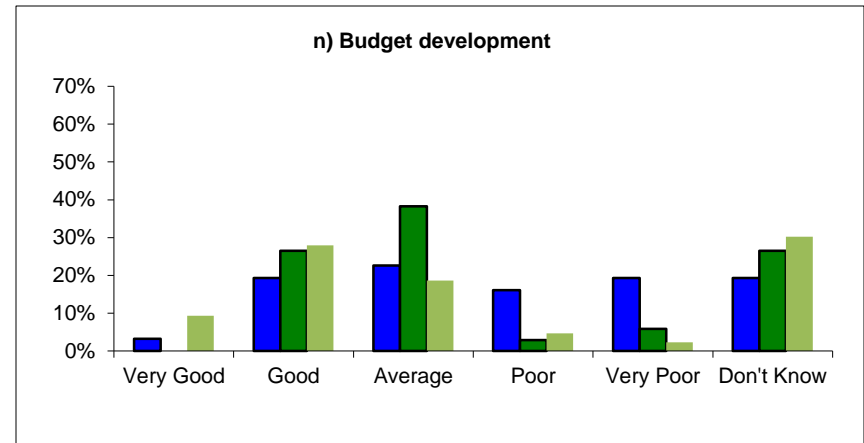
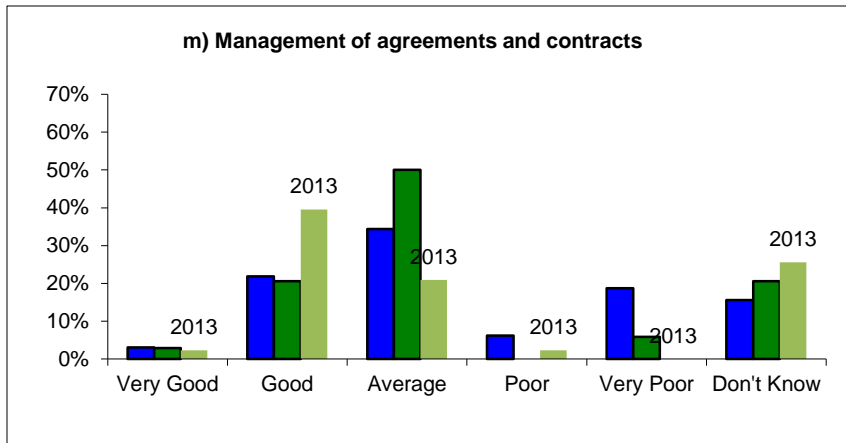
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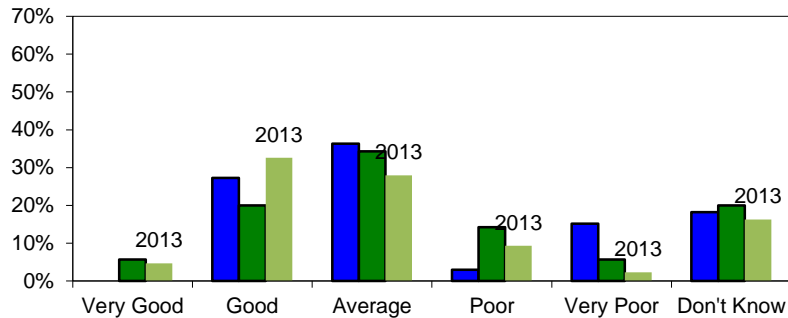


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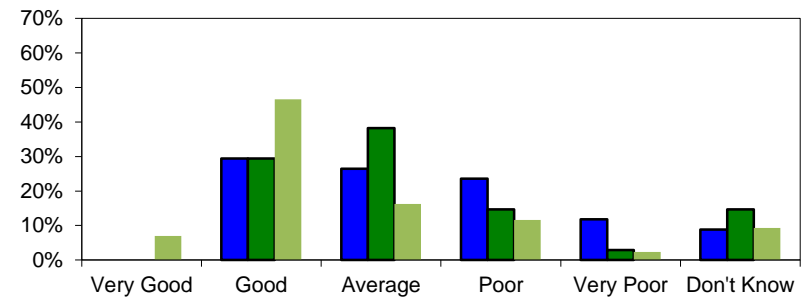


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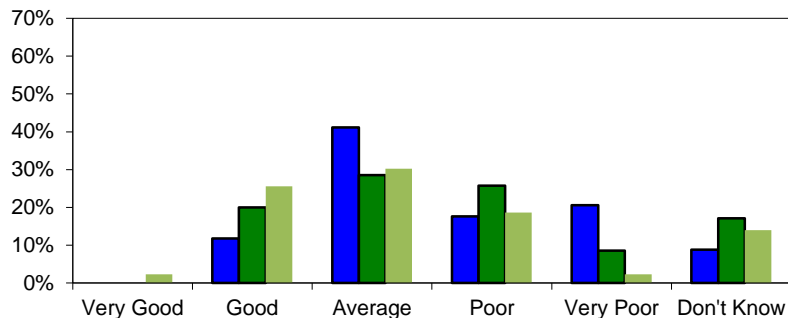
q) Transit system performance monitoring



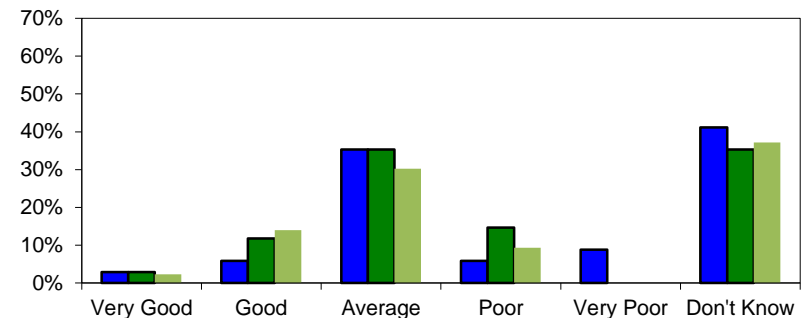
r) Communication with local partners on transit specific issues



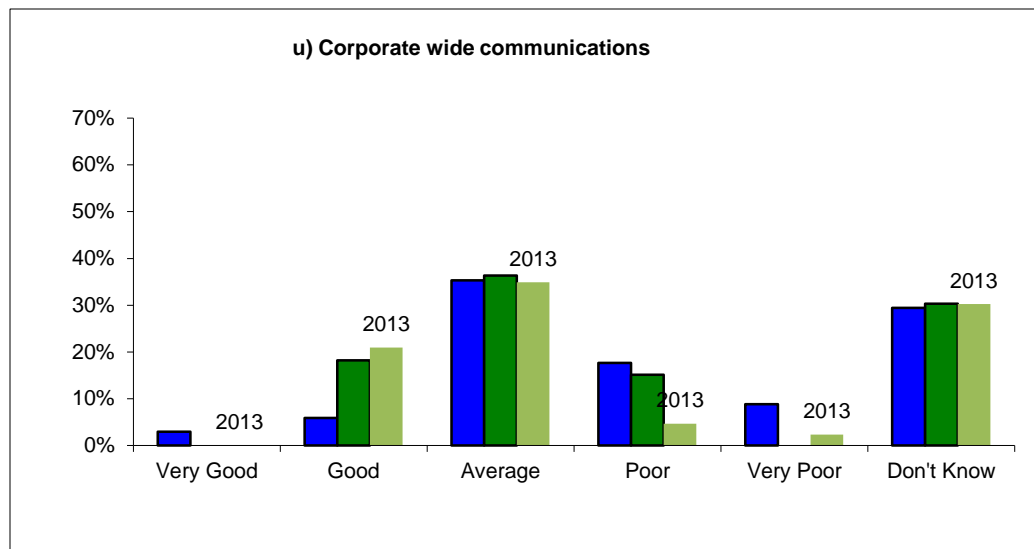
s) Promotion of transit in your community



t) Corporate wide planning



How would you rate the service you received from BC Transit for the following functions:



What specific changes would you recommend to improve the level of service?

- The staff we work with are good. Nice to see they are not being shuffled away to other areas as has happened in the past. Some systemic problems in Transit that are not specifically the problems of our two local staff persons.
- Greater dialogue in support of major infrastructure projects
- Our new regional contact person assigned has been very communicative and responsive to our concerns. Continuation of this responsiveness would be welcome.
- To provide financial information and accurate ridership by route data 2 times per year and with comparisons to the previous year and other similar systems. Also to provide budget information at times that work better for local governments. If we could get draft budget info in early Sept (not Oct) and revised budgets in Feb (not March) that will provide a more accurate support as the RD budget is discussed on October and then revised again in February. Better coordination of delivery of new vehicles. We had planned and budgeted with BCT to receive a new vehicle for Custom in Sept 2012 and as yet have not received it.
- Occasional direct communication.
- This is a tough survey to fill out, we are in partnership with the Regional District and another municipality. We provide operating funds but do not have much to do with the day to day operations except for selling tickets. All management work is done through the Regional District.
- We only have one bus and the support we have received from BC Transit has been very good so far.
- None.
- An organization chart, roles/responsibilities matrix, key contacts to understand the functions within BC Transit that affect local government. Sharing information with staff in advance of Commission meetings, since local government elected officials are members of the Commission. Perhaps quarterly meetings with short-term planning/scheduling staff and bi-annual meetings with long-range planning staff. Integrated planning effort that involves local government, the Regional District, and Ministry of Transportation. It seems that transportation planning efforts still remain siloed within the CRD.



What specific changes would you recommend to improve the level of service?

- Better understanding on internal reporting structure at BC Transit. A list of available services from BC Transit. An annual transit promotion plan. An explanation on each invoice for potential deviations from budget amount. BC Transit regional offices to better connect with service areas. Information sharing on complaints received. More busses available. Infrastructure improvement plan. Regional transportation plan.
- Our service is provided through the Victoria Transit Commission representing all the municipalities in the CRD.
- Return phone calls and improve proactive communications materials.
- We have only recently taken had responsibility for system. Next year we will be in a better position to answer these questions.
- Our new RTM is trying to provide a high level of service however appears that more support is required. RTM is doing good job. As tier 2 system we appreciate consistent and innovative level of support. Need to have improved communications and more detailed explanation of annual cost changes plus contracted services like taxi service. Reporting out on agreements and 2012 actuals for stats were lacking. An example was stats on ridership. We have concerns regarding timely and accurate data on the transit system, passenger counts as well as advice and information on transit best practices. Recognize that the service has challenges and need to have strong partnership to stretch the tax dollar to provide the best level of service. Extremely happy with local service contractor, excellent resource to BC Transit and regional district.
- Increased promotion of transit services in the community (ie: media, posters, signs, etc) is required. Small, rural transit services have challenges that differ substantially from large, urban centres. Scheduling is difficult with a limited number of buses that travel long distances throughout the day. Community awareness of the transit service, schedule, and service interruptions is of utmost concern when the next bus may not be along for several hours or even the next day. Performance monitoring reports need to separate the public transit service from the Health Connections service. This will enable us to determine how each service is performing and assist with future work planning.
- Timing of approvals for small items takes too long (ie ads, changes to the Riders Guide etc).A sustainable policy for fleet purchase & maintenance that would increase vehicle life and reduce costs.



What specific changes would you recommend to improve the level of service?

- We are currently undertaking a Transit Future Plan so have benefitted from considerable attention of the planner responsible for that program. Our RTM continues to provide very good service to us. We are frustrated by the lack of operational data from the GFI fareboxes that limits our ability to define micro service needs.
- Frequency of service could be improved, particularly weekdays am. More capital funds should be made available to improve bus stops and shelters in particular in the Town Centre. Opportunities for cost sharing should be investigated.
- More information on ridership and more details in the budget
- The only relationship we have with BC Transit is as a partner in the Regional one day a week service. We hope that we will be able to develop a positive working relationship with BC Transit in the future.
- The GFI fareboxes are not providing the value for the money if we cannot utilise the bad list . Keep working on improving the website. Greater attention needs to be paid to ensuring the operator meets their commitments made in the new contract.
- BC Transit has spent a lot of time reworking our transit over the past couple of years. Last year's efforts by staff were very good. This year staff was just as committed and dedicated to tweaking the major changes. The RTM and Planning staff have been amazing. It seems that the Communications and Marketing team can still cause the RTM and the local governments some grief as they are trying to enforce BC Transit brand standards even when they don't make sense locally. In some ways, it ends up causing everyone more work. The RTM has been very good at convincing that group that small deviations from the overall BC Transit standard won't hurt the BC Transit brand and will enhance the reputation and brand in external (to Victoria) and more rural communities.
- None.



CAO: Does BC Transit make itself available to your staff to respond to your questions?

- District has had difficulty getting a response to our questions in a *timely* fashion.
- Yes, we have a very good relationship with BC Transit and our queries are answered on a very timely basis.
- Through the Regional District Transit Management Advisory Committee.
- Not really; CVRD staff will respond.
- BC Transit does not supply service to our community.
- Yes - as required
- Yes, although receiving consistent and timely answers is a problem.
- Our community is both a transit provider and the operator so we deal with BCT on both aspects. We have a RTM and he has worked closely with our staff and council as well as the region. The senior staff have also made a point of visiting the area to provide staff updates on and get feedback on the direction BCT is heading. This also has been helpful.
- Not applicable as transit is a regional service.
- Yes. We continue to see improvements from BC Transit in this area over the past 3 years.
- Yes, but we do not have transit.
- Yes, For the most part.
- Yes, however there tends to be a requirement to push for additional information. Have seen improvement in some sectors including new RTM but decrease in performance in other sectors that has netted no significant overall improvement.
- Yes. Responsiveness to staff inquiries is very good although sometimes delayed due to workload.
- Service provided through the Regional District.
- Yes they do - they have been very responsive this past year.
- Yes, as needed.
- Yes, staff are available however the responses rarely forthcoming in a timely manner.
- While BCT make themselves available, the responses are not consistent nor always reliable and timing of responses has become a ongoing problem.
- On the whole, BC Transit staff have made themselves reasonably available to our staff, although there are the occasional lengthier gaps in response times to inquiries or in providing pertinent information. There are too many BC Transit representatives, not a consistent representative from BC Transit to municipality; RTM, Planners, etc., etc. Need one person to coordinate information.



CAO: Does BC Transit make itself available to your Council or Board to respond to questions?

- Need has not presented itself. Unable to answer.
- Yes, BC Transit representatives have attended a number of Council meetings to address questions and concerns. We have also met with BC transit while in Victoria for UBCM
- Not on an ongoing basis.
- If requested they probably would.
- Yes, through our joint transit committee.
- Yes, as above.
- Not applicable as transit is a regional service.
- Yes, UBCM
- Yes, but we do not have transit.
- The need has not arisen, to date.
- On a periodic basis at our request and through UBCM meetings.
- Yes. BCT staff always attend Transit committee meetings.
- Yes if requested
- They have made themselves available to our Joint Advisory Services Committee with Regional District - we have not tried to engage them with Council.
- Haven't made that request - deal at a sub-regional level with transit.
- Yes, as needed.
- To some extent, but their lack of complete or intimate knowledge of local conditions can be difficult and create problems.
- BC Transit has made several presentations to Council over the past five years and has appeared willing to continue to do so. However, Council has often required follow-up discussions/presentations from BC Transit after these presentations because Council's questions could not be readily answered or the information was not yet available. BC Transit reports are never on time or in advance of Council deadlines.



CAO: Has BC Transit made itself available to provide assistance during your budget process?

- For the most part BC Transit has not responded in a timely fashion. The District has had questions/concerns during budget deliberations and responses were very slow in coming.
- BC Transit has provided as much information as we require for our budget process
- Could be better. Should be proactive and review results and explain variances.
- No. They have never been asked.
- N/A. We currently have no BC Transit service in the District of Hope to support. We also don't provide local, publically funded transport.
- By phone call and in person Although sometimes getting the info required is slow
- Never consulted.
- Yes, although their support is sporadic and they have a hard time working to our timeframes as opposed to their fiscal year.
- The new 3 year forecasts have been quite helpful in developing our budgets. We work with our RTM quite closely from the operator side of the equation in developing the operator budget, which ultimately gets reflected in our financial plan.
- Not applicable as transit is a regional service.
- Yes. This is also an area where there has been an improvement.
- RD is in process of taking over the system as a sub-regional service. BCT have been very helpful in providing assistance to us during the transition and we expect them to be equally responsive during the budgeting process.
- Yes, however, there needs to be more detailed information available on a line by line basis to explain clearly what the budget line items include. The timing of the provision of budget information by BC Transit has been challenging to match with the RD budgeting process. The provision of 3 year budgets from BC transit will help with the RD long term financial plans but significant delay in receiving these 3 year budgets this year. Challenging issues are revenue projections and marketing revenue.
- Yes and we very much appreciate it.
- They have not been asked to attend budget but the Board is very concerned about recent changes to transit funding made by BCT which have drastically increased our costs of operations.
- There has never been the need for them to attend, however the information we require for our budget is often late and sometimes there is no rationale for the costs provided.
- Yes, but we have experienced multiple delays and errors which have required many iterations to ensure quality control creating frustration and friction with the partnership.
- Numerous discrepancies between the two organizations have taken time to resolve. Often BC Transit will provide the information the day of budget.



CAO: What else could BC Transit do to make discussions with your Council or Board easier?

- Quite simply make an effort to respond to concerns within a specified time frame. For example our office will acknowledge a complaint/enquiry within 24 hours and if necessary will indicate when one might expect a detailed response.
- We have no comments to make - everything we have asked for has been addressed.
- All good.
- Control spending. Let municipalities participate in bus purchases
- Yearly communication with Council.
- Keep in touch with us.
- Continued periodic updates to Council, specifically regarding transit pilot project to Hope.
- Provide actual budget planning numbers well in advance of January 1st so Local Government has better estimates to work with. I like the 3 year budget planning. Include debt costs in the provincial numbers of the budget for transparency purposes.
- More regular communication between all stakeholders.
- You could provide more funding.
- Have one contact person who was familiar with all the issues.
- The region has formed a regional transit committee and this has brought together the 3 local governments. A regional plan has been developed and will be implemented this summer. This involved significant consultation with staff, elected officials and the public. This was a very positive project and has got the 3 local governments working together.
- Having three different transit systems is a challenge from regional connection perspective (no link between our two major systems) makes it difficult for everyone to look at the regional perspective. Need to improve communications between the systems.
- We appreciate the change in Transit and the new level of support we receive for operational and financial matters. The service is very good.
- The RD has a Board versus a Council. Still looking for new farebox system to provide data for analysis, GFI investment has not shown to be effective and is not proving better information for reporting and planning purposes. Improved cost/benefit/ridership information and focus efforts on improving revenue opportunities to offset local government costs.
- No suggestions. It's fine as it is.



CAO: What else could BC Transit do to make discussions with your Council or Board easier?

- Just having BC Transit staff available to meet has been a huge help and we are hopeful this will continue.
- RD has been attempting to establish a regional transit system. BC Transit has been unable to supply the planners necessary to conduct the master plan which is required prior to initiating a service.
- I think we need a collective approach - it is too easy to deal with many small systems rather than one unified approach. I also think BCT has been less than forth coming on the financial impacts of the new models (OA's).
- Conference calls, ITV
- Providing a service level that meets the local government's needs and expectations. The focus of change should be related to the development of working relationships, ensuring value for money, issues management and service delivery.
- Work with local governments to improve the partnership by utilizing resources of all partners better and continuously striving for 'best practices'.
- Council would appreciate a greater investment in public consultation/education from BC Transit, specifically related to route changes or capital projects in this area. Meaningful dialogue with the municipality, not just BC Transit's issues but the municipalities as well - be a partner.



CAO: Do you have other suggestions that would enable BC Transit to improve its communications with you?

- You're doing a good job – just do more of it.
- As part of our ongoing efforts at promoting sustainable economic development, BC Transit should also enhance communications with local economic development agencies (e.g. Advantage Hope) to further develop transit strategies.
- No. Other than additional help for the regional person and more marketing help info.
- Annual newsletter or eNewsletter.
- Ongoing communications with smaller Municipalities not just the Regional Districts.
- BC Transit has been quite helpful in developing local plans.
- Create generalists who can deal with all aspects of local government issues and that can provide quality and timely feedback.
- The RTM is critical in the process, we would encourage the senior management team to ensure they are using this resource as part of setting strategic direction, getting feedback from local government and communicating direction with local government. We would like to see more support from marketing in setting direction on building ridership.
- Revisit the Transit Commission structure for the Greater Victoria area to create a better representation of all municipalities.
- We need to have a discussion about the dual role the RD plays: on the one hand a municipal partner (new sub-regional transit service) and on the other hand from a Regional Growth Strategy perspective. Don't necessarily think BC Transit fully recognizes the importance of this latter role.
- We are satisfied and look forward to more consultative work with Transit.
- Improved public information, joint meetings to meet local needs.
- BCT staff frequently overloaded with work reducing response time particularly with public complaints.
- We have implemented regional transit meetings.
- Come up with a less intensive/complicated and more fair (more money!) funding model...and allow more flexibility for areas to implement transit operations to suit their needs.
- Regular scheduled Quarterly discussion be it by phone or in person.
- Be open to change and to listen to the concerns of the Local Government.
- Reassign some responsibilities to either the Operator or to the local government where the scale of local knowledge and expertise provides more efficient delivery of transit service and provides better integration with local multi-modal transportation systems and land use.
- Consideration should be given to ensuring continuity of staff liaisons to local communities, or to ensuring that the information BC Transit staff oversee is passed on appropriately. BC Transit representatives change and new representatives (or consultants) have to be brought up to speed on information and projects underway. BC Transit consistently misses deadlines and commitments given to local governments.

