

Highway 16 Action Plan: Inter-Community Transit

Frequently Asked Questions – Recommended Service Options

The Highway 16 corridor spans from Prince Rupert to Prince George: why doesn't one of the service options have a bus travelling the entire corridor?

- Based on conversations with community leaders to date, the most pressing transportation gap is a lack of connection between smaller communities and their nearest larger community for same day return travel (health, shopping, social/recreation, services, etc.) The service options are focused on addressing that need.
- There are existing long distance providers operating between Prince Rupert and Prince George (Northern Health Connections, Greyhound, Via Rail) and unlike current BC Transit's vehicles, they are equipped for long distance travel (washrooms, luggage storage, etc.). It would be more effective to work with these existing long distance providers to adjust policies or schedules and layer shorter trip BC Transit services on top rather than duplicating service. In general, BC Transit services seek to complement, not compete with, private carriers.

Why is Burns Lake proposed as the location of the new transit hub? Why not just bring buses from Prince George or Smithers?

- Burns Lake has been identified as the most common "dividing point" for the direction that people want to travel in terms of service to Smithers or service to Prince George. Burns Lake also has the services required to maintain and store transit vehicles.
- Consolidating transit services in this hub in the middle of the corridor between Prince George and Smithers means that it maximizes the amount of service delivered through available funds as there are lower overhead costs (by sharing vehicles and operations in one location) and fewer vehicles required. This in turn enables more days of service to be offered for the same cost.
 - For instance, if a key travel pattern is from Burns Lake to Prince George, it would be possible to house buses in Prince George and have buses travel to Burns Lake to start the route. However, the bus would need to leave Prince George very early in the morning, it would likely carry few if any passengers (since it would be travelling in the opposite direction of where most would want to go at that time of day), and would use vital service hours without much value for residents. Alternatively, housing the bus closer to Burns Lake reduces the time the bus is travelling from its garage to the start of its route and enables that time to be invested in more days of service. This same approach also applies to why it is not suggested that the Burns Lake to Smithers segment be operated by vehicles housed in Smithers.
- Locating a transit hub in Burns Lake provides advantages to the entire corridor because it means that transit operating centres are located along its length at consistent intervals: Prince Rupert, Terrace, Hazelton (Two Mile), Smithers (Telkwa), Burns Lake,

Prince George. Having these locations at two to three hour intervals means that the furthest any vehicle is away from support is 90 minutes.

- Having a chain of operating centres can provide resilience to the service in case of mechanical breakdown or extreme weather. (See also Section 4.5 Special Considerations and Contingency Strategies).

Why are the proposed service options for two or three days per week?

- Similar existing long regional and interregional transit routes in BC typically operate one to three days per week.
- Recommended days of operation will be confirmed through public consultation on detailed routes and schedules. Once final scheduling and operational details are confirmed, final costs may enable additional service days to be considered.

Why are some options based on one round trip per day and others two round trips?

- All options focus on enabling passengers to access their nearest larger community (Prince George, Smithers, Terrace, Prince Rupert) and providing customers about 3-4 hours there before returning home.
 - In areas that have shorter travel times and a greater chance that passengers will be travelling in either direction along the corridor (Burns Lake – Houston - Smithers, Prince Rupert – Terrace), two round trips are presented because they are more feasible.
 - In areas that have longer travel times and where most travel is in one direction only (Burns Lake – Prince George, Hazeltons area – Terrace), one round trip is proposed since it enables better scheduling and results in a shorter overall day for travelers. It also provides the potential to have the vehicle assist with in-town drop-offs and pick-ups in the destination communities, particularly in the case of passengers with disabilities.
- Schedules will ultimately be refined and confirmed through proposed upcoming consultation.

How will rural areas and other communities not immediately on the Highway 16 corridor be served?

- The presented transit options focus on keeping transit primarily on the Highway 16 corridor as much as possible. Doing so makes service more direct and attractive to passengers and also enables the most service to be delivered effectively.
- Where there are safe pull offs to do so, transit services will make stops along the corridor. Each option also notes where small local loops are proposed in larger communities to access medical and shopping destinations.
- For more rural areas and communities off the corridor, community-led transportation initiatives potentially funded through the new Highway 16 community vehicle capital

and operating grant program¹--available to provide funds to enable the purchase of vehicles for non-profits, local governments and First Nations communities not directly on the corridor--could be used to provide connection. Each transit option notes where these potential community-led transportation solutions could connect to transit service.

¹ More information on the Highway 16 Community Transportation Grant Program and its application process can be found here: <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/transportation/funding-engagement-permits/funding-grants/highway-16-funding>