

Notes of Meeting

Date of Meeting: January 7, 2010

Project Number: 60114570-0100 (formerly 6595-024-00-01) Time: 1:30pm – 3:30pm

Project Name: **Bow Valley Regional Transit Services Commission**

Location: Banff Town Hall

Regarding: Revised structure for the BVRTSC

Attendees of Municipal Meetings:

Cheryl Hyde	representing	Town of Banff
Bill Lambert	representing	AECOM
Ian Mackie	representing	I.D. #9
Dave Schebek	representing	I.D. #9
Jason Zimmerman	representing	Banff Engineering
John Stutz	representing	Mayor of Banff
Iona To	representing	AECOM
Ron Casey	representing	Mayor of Canmore
Ron Stonier	representing	Tourism Canmore
Kevin Van Vliet	representing	Canmore Engineering
Darren Reeder	representing	Banff Lake Louise Hotel Motel Association
Mike Murtha	representing	Parks Canada
Don Beaulieu	representing	Sunshine Village
Mark Yawney	representing	Banff Airporter

Distribution: Ladd Snowsell Mt Norquay/Lake Louise/Sunshine Ski Areas

PLEASE NOTE: This is not a verbatim account of everything said in this meeting. It is a brief summary of the key points as transcribed by Iona To and Bill Lambert. The PowerPoint agenda and the issues/opportunities discussion outline are attached. If there are any omissions, please advise, otherwise we will assume the contents to be correct.

Bill Lambert gave a presentation on: the comments received from the last set of consultation meetings in early December, 2009; the proposed revised municipality-only Commission structure; a proposed scaled down set of transit services (which only includes a regional Banff-Canmore service and the existing Banff local service) and their associated costs for the initial start-up activities of the Commission; and the recommended next steps for the Steering Committee. Partnerships with Parks Canada and other organizations would be formed to provide other additional transit services (e.g. Park bus service).

Questions raised and addressed about the revised Commission structure and transit services included the following:

1. How do we address the lack of provincial funding right now, which was one of the initial impetuses to start a Regional Transit Commission?
 - This is likely a temporary situation, especially with the increasing interest over transit services by senior levels of government. Sources such as the Green TRIP funding could potentially be re-instated later this year.
 - The formation of a Commission will still serve to attract more funding from senior governments through grants or through other funding sources.
 - With the Commission formed, it can use this initiative to instigate discussions with the provincial government on more suitable forms of funding for regional transit entities. It can also begin discussions with the federal government on funding the first transit service in a Canadian national park (e.g. this is a great green initiative for both the province and federal governments). As well, it would promote discussions and negotiations with a broader segment of the accommodation sector (i.e., Canmore, Lake Louise, Banff) and other businesses that clearly benefit (by increasing mobility for visitors to the Bow Valley by transit), on how they could form partnerships with the Regional Transit Commission to enhance transit services in the Bow Valley
2. Would the Commission be obligated to provide all the transit services stated in the 5 year Business Plan? Perhaps establishing a less formalized committee and not the BVRTSC may offer more flexibility.
 - The Bow Valley Waste Management Commission had also submitted a 5 year business plan when it was first formed. However, it has not been able to achieve everything that was included in the plan or in the sequence/staging outlined, and it has not been penalized for this. The business plan is not meant to a regulatory document. It only serves as a guide. Therefore, it is unlikely that the BVRTSC will be bound to implement everything that is included in the plan by the provincial government.
 - Other funders such as Parks Canada, as well as taxpayers, would be less willing to provide money to a less formalized group or to one municipality trying to co-ordinate transit services (e.g. Banff).
3. Will there be insufficient ridership on the new transit services? Most of the new Chinese visitors will likely come on tour groups and will not be using transit, and the regional visitors usually come with their own vehicles.
 - There are approximately 3 million visitors each year to the Banff National Park, and two-thirds of these visitors are regional and only 3-4% are from Asia. Therefore, there are still nearly 1 million other visitors for which the transit services could be targeted.
 - Having a more aggressive marketing strategy is a key way to properly reach the different target audiences.
 - A combination of providing frequent, attractive and reliable transit services where people want to go, with the easy fare systems such as SmartCards, along with some

- push policies (e.g. parking costs in towns, some restrictions on where visitors can park in the Bow Valley) will attract transit ridership.
- The region also needs to be organized and ready to react when the economy recovers and the percentage of international tourists begins to climb up again. Reacting when only there is pressure will not lead to a good outcome – the region will be clearly behind the eight ball. Establishing the Commission now will ensure that the proper structure is in place and that the region is ready to respond to the increased need for much enhanced transit mobility in Bow Valley.
4. The cost to each member to form a Regional Transit Services Commission is still relatively high, given the present economic climate.
- The costs included in the business plan will only serve as a guide. The Commission will still have the opportunity after the Commission is formed to determine what levels of transit service they want to provide, and how they might want to partner with other existing providers to reduce the costs to the Commission, and provide transit services.
 - The transit manager can also be an internal staff member who uses existing office space (e.g. at the Banff or Canmore Town Hall), so that would further reduce the administrative costs. A new BVRTSC transit manager may not be initially required
5. The new transit services will disadvantage the existing private operators in terms of overriding the existing transit services they are providing, and the Commission would not use the buses owned by the private operators, as they are buying their own buses.
- The intention is to contract out all of the new services to private sector transport providers (i.e., the operators would operate, and in most cases maintain and likely own many of the buses) and this is emphasized in the business plan.
 - Parks Canada may purchase a few buses later on for the Park bus service and lease them to the Commission for winter use. However, this is only because the current buses owned by the private operators are not wheelchair accessible. The intent now in the Business Plan is for Parks Canada to purchase the buses required for the Parks Explorer service and then allow these buses to be used by the BVRTSC for other services in the winter season, for a dollar. This is an inexpensive means of providing capital resources for the BVRTSC (it is lower than paying the private sector for the capitalization cost of buses, which is included in the total operating costs for a service contract)
 - There will likely be a requirement to purchase accessible buses due to changing legislative requirements in this area, and insistence that provincial or federal capital dollars be used to buy accessible buses when used for this purpose is a good idea.
 - The Commission would also work with the existing providers to determine how the existing services can be better coordinated, enhanced, (e.g. have a higher level of service) and marketed. These will be one of the first priorities of the Commission.
 - The Commission will establish service performance standards and guidelines in order to meet public transit needs and requirements, and these service levels will likely be higher than what the private sector can provide at a profit.
 - The provision of contracted transit services by the BVRTSC for specific routes will be at a level defined by specific service standards defined by the Commission, and it will be exclusive for that route, and not subject to competition from another private transportation provider (i.e., The Commission will have some exclusivity, just as a municipal garbage service would in a specific area).
6. The ski resorts bus service issue still needs to be dealt with, since this is what initially led to the discussions regarding a regionalized transit system almost three years ago.

- The ski resorts recognize the financial situation that the municipalities are currently in, and understand why they have been excluded from the Commission for the time being. The industry will reassess how they will continue providing the ski bus service in the short term.

At the end of the meeting, AECOM indicated that they would be able to revise the business plan, bylaw, and regulation to better reflect the discussions of the meeting (i.e. a municipal sponsored and funded BVRTSC), and prepare the application for the approval of the Minister of Municipal Affairs to establish the BVRTSC. To complete this work and fund the consultants' costs, Cheryl requested that each of the municipal councils approve a motion to contribute approximately \$4,000 (which is 25% of the \$50,000 grant to be requested from the provincial government in 2010 for this work). Each municipality representative agreed that they would support this motion and would raise it with their respective councils.

NEXT STEPS

By the end of January, a revised Business Plan, bylaw, and regulation will be sent out to the Steering Committee for their approval at a workshop/meeting. Once the necessary additional revisions are made, each municipality representative will present the documents to their respective councils and raise a motion to sign the Regional Transit Services Commission Authorization Bylaw, which gives the Ministry of Municipal Affairs the authority to take the necessary action to establish a Regional Transit Services Commission.

Next meeting: To be determined-likely in the last week of January (28th or 29th)

Notes taken by: Iona To with input from AECOM team members