

# Creation of Bow Valley Regional Transit Services Commission

Within the past five months, further extensive consultations with individual stakeholders (including the Bow Valley municipalities, ski resorts, Banff-Lake Louise accommodation sector, Parks Canada, and existing private sector transport providers) have taken place regarding establishing a Bow Valley Regional Transit Services Commission (BVRTSC) for the Bow Valley.

Key feedback received from these consultations included the following:

- With the economic downturn, the accommodation sector is experiencing much higher vacancy rates than usual and therefore unable to be a significant financial contributor to the Commission at this time. However, it is expected it would continue its current contribution to the Banff local transit service, ROAM arranged through fare partnerships with individual accommodation sites. However, the accommodation sector recognizes the value of establishing a regional transit service commission and its benefits to their industry. Discussions will continue after the establishment of the BVRTSC with the accommodation sector in Canmore, Banff and Lake Louise, and other businesses that benefit from local and regional transit services (by bringing more customers and employees to their areas) in terms of how they could contribute to funding these services in exchange for these benefits.
- Reduced funding from higher levels of government (e.g. delay of the provincial Green TRIP transit funding) and local municipal financial constraints mean that municipalities are unable to take over the management of the ski resorts bus services at this time. Therefore, the ski resorts will be reassessing how they will continue funding these services in the short term.
- Parks Canada is fully supportive of funding a seasonal Park bus service serving popular camping and hiking sites. Such a service would reduce the negative environmental impact of transportation on Banff National Park and the traffic congestion within the Park, and provide added value to the Park visitor.
- The private transport operators currently providing services within the Bow Valley would like to work with the Commission to bid on and deliver public transit services.
- The transit services could be initiated at a smaller scale and lower service level so as to reduce the initial service costs.
- The services of highest priority are a new Park bus summer service, a new Canmore-Banff regional service

that would provide commuters and visitors an alternative affordable transportation option, and the existing local Town of Banff ROAM service.

Given this feedback, the Steering Committee is now pursuing a municipality-only Commission and will initially focus on establishing a regular Canmore-Banff regional service and the continual operation of the Banff ROAM service. It will also partner with Parks Canada and other organizations to deliver the Park bus service and other potential services (e.g. Banff-Lake Louise regional service).

Although some of these services are already being offered by private operators, the Commission will be able to work with private bus service operators to provide better coordination, marketing, and pricing of these services. It will also be able to increase service levels where it is required. In addition, this municipality-only Commission will establish the structure necessary to manage an expanded regionalized transit system once the economy has recovered.

AECOM Consulting, who has been involved in the project since mid-2009, is now preparing an application to be sent to the Minister of Municipal Affairs for the approval to establish the Commission. This application will be first reviewed by the Steering Committee during the last week of January 2010 and will then be sent to each of the councils for their approval before it is forwarded to the Minister. This application package will include the following documents:

- a regulation, which outlines the Commission's basic organizational structure and powers, to establish the commission;
- a detailed bylaw establishing the direction, functions and procedures for the BVRTSC; and
- A five-year business plan including budgets, organizational charts and service descriptions.

Once the Commission is established, a Transit Manager will be hired to oversee the day-to-day operations of the Commission. The Commission will also continue discussions with private bus operators to determine how it will plan for improved bus services that can be implemented while working with the private sector. The intention is to have private bus operators operate and maintain the buses used by the Commission. In almost all cases, under contract to the Commission, the buses will also be owned by the private operators. It will be an objective of the Commission to have all buses be fully accessible.

For more information on this project, to tell us where you think transit services should be added or improved in the Bow Valley, or your thoughts on this initiative, please contact:

**Cheryl Hyde**

Municipal Clerk

Town of Banff

[municipal.clerk@banff.ca](mailto:municipal.clerk@banff.ca)

Tel: 403-762-1209

**Bill Lambert, M.Plg., M.P.A., MCIP**

Manager, Transit Planning Services, Western Canada

Transportation, AECOM Canada Ltd.

[bill.lambert@aecom.com](mailto:bill.lambert@aecom.com)

Tel: 604-412-3527, Cell: 604-812-7292