



Grande Prairie Regional Handibus Feasibility Study



June 2018





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In collaboration with the Town of Wembley, City of Grande Prairie, County of Grande Prairie, Town of Beaverlodge, Town of Sexsmith and Village of Hythe, Watt Consulting Group would like to thank all those citizens, elected officials, municipal staff, stakeholders and service providers who provided their feedback and ideas into this process.

In particular, we are grateful to the contributions of the project Steering Committee members who represented each of the municipal partners and who provided guidance and input:

City of Grande Prairie: David Olinger (Municipal Project Lead), Steve Harvard;

County of Grande Prairie: Kathleen Turner; Coree Ladwig;

Town of Wembley: Lori Parker, Pam Decker;

Town of Sexsmith: Rachel Wueschner, Naomi Robinson;

Town of Beaverlodge: Bill McKennan, Trudy Hodges;

Village of Hythe: Greg Gatton, Teresa Boudreault.

The project also appreciatively acknowledges the support of the Alberta Community Partnership.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Grande Prairie Regional Handibus Feasibility Study (“Handibus Feasibility Study”) focuses on identifying opportunities to improve mobility options primarily for seniors and disabled residents to attend to basic needs including medical and dental appointments, shopping, and social outings in the Grande Prairie region.

Funded through an Alberta Community Partnership grant obtained by the Town of Wembley, the study was undertaken through a partnership with the City of Grande Prairie, the County of Grande Prairie, the towns of Wembley, Beaverlodge and Sexsmith, and the Village of Hythe. The study was conducted by Watt Consulting Group in collaboration with these municipalities.

In Focus: Regional Handibus Study Goals

- Summarize area resident transportation needs and opportunities, with a **primary focus on the travel needs of seniors and people with a disability**.
- Determine how local and regional connection can be **delivered and coordinated as effectively as possible**.
- Deliver a final report that describes **service types, options and associated cost and performance** projections.
- Provide guidance on **supporting operational aspects**, such as operating models, governance structures, fleet coordination, monitoring, marketing, fares and eligibility.
- Present options for **individual communities** in cases where a regional model may not be feasible.

Project Process and Timeline

Undertaken from January 2018 to June 2018, the Handibus Feasibility Study was guided by a Steering Committee made up of staff representatives from the six partner municipalities, with the City of Grande Prairie providing overall municipal staff leadership to the project.

As part of the first phase, (January 2018 – February, 2018), the consultant project team conducted interviews with key local government staff, community stakeholders and existing transportation providers throughout the region to determine transportation needs, issues and opportunities. This outreach was supported by further analysis of existing transportation services, community plans and demographic trends.

In the second phase (March 2018 – May, 2018), the project team shared and refined these findings and preliminary service concepts through engagement with the general public, stakeholders and elected officials through a series of public open houses, community surveys and a workshop.

Four Steering Committee workshops were also conducted to shape the study process, recommendations and final report.

The Handibus Feasibility Study was also cognizant of an application made by area communities to the Alberta Rural Transportation Pilot Program, which if funded would focus on fixed route service to designated stops. The two separate initiatives are being explored in a coordinated manner.

Existing Transportation Services and Population Outlook

More than a dozen community organizations currently contribute to the provision of transportation within the Grande Prairie region.

Within the City of Grande Prairie, transportation serving the needs of seniors and people with a disability includes the fixed route public transit service the City operates plus specialized services operated by the Disabled Transportation Society of Grande Prairie (DTS).

In the region surrounding the City, many existing service providers serve aspects of transportation need within their communities and organizations, as shown in the table at right and the map on the following page.

The organizations shown receive funding from the County of Grande Prairie's Seniors and Special Needs Transportation Operating Assistance Grant program. While in some cases funding goes towards reimbursing volunteer drivers transporting individuals, seven communities already have Handibus services that operate regularly to and from Grande Prairie and to other locations for recreational opportunities. These services vary in frequency from once per week (Beaverlodge), to twice per month (Hythe,

Wembley) and once per month (Sexsmith, La Glace), with a slightly higher frequency provided as needed to Clairmont.

As discussed further in the following **Issues and**

Opportunities section, these existing services are meeting some needs but there is a larger unmet demand, particularly for medical-related trips. Also, many residents are relying on family, social workers/caregivers and other means (paid drivers, taxis) that may not be socially or financially sustainable over the long term.

At the same time, changing population trends will continue to put pressure on existing services. While the population composition varies across each of the study partner municipalities, overall the proportion of older seniors age 75 years and over is increasing at a faster rate in the Grande Prairie region than in the province of Alberta (21% versus 13%, respectively). This 75+ age category is

often when citizen accessible transit need tends to increase due to declines in mobility, cognitive function or ability/desire to drive. Therefore, this population trend—coupled with continued construction of seniors' housing outside the City—will put further pressure on the network of existing services to meet transportation demand.

EXISTING REGIONAL SERVICE PROVIDERS	
Organizations receiving funding through the County of Grande Prairie's Seniors and Special Needs Transportation Operating Assistance Grants	
Organization	2016 Ridership
Amisk Court Social Club	70
Beaverlodge Hidden Potential Society	25
Beaverlodge Seniors Citizens Association	270
Disabled Transportation Society of Grande Prairie (DTS)	672*
Bezanson Golden Years Club	290
Grande Prairie and District Golden Age Centre	348
Grande Spirit Foundation	1,840
Hythe and District Pioneer Home	409
Hythe Golden Age Craft Centre	96
Sexsmith and District Seniors Association	24
Sexsmith Sunset Homes and Tenants Association	30
Silver & Gold Pioneer Club of Wembley	160
Town of Beaverlodge	700
Twilight Club of La Glace	120
Wolverines Wheelchair Sports Association	30
Total	4,412

* Figures shown represent only portion of DTS ridership in County areas.

Issues and Opportunities

Analysis of existing services and community conversations through the study process determined a number of key issues and opportunities. These included:

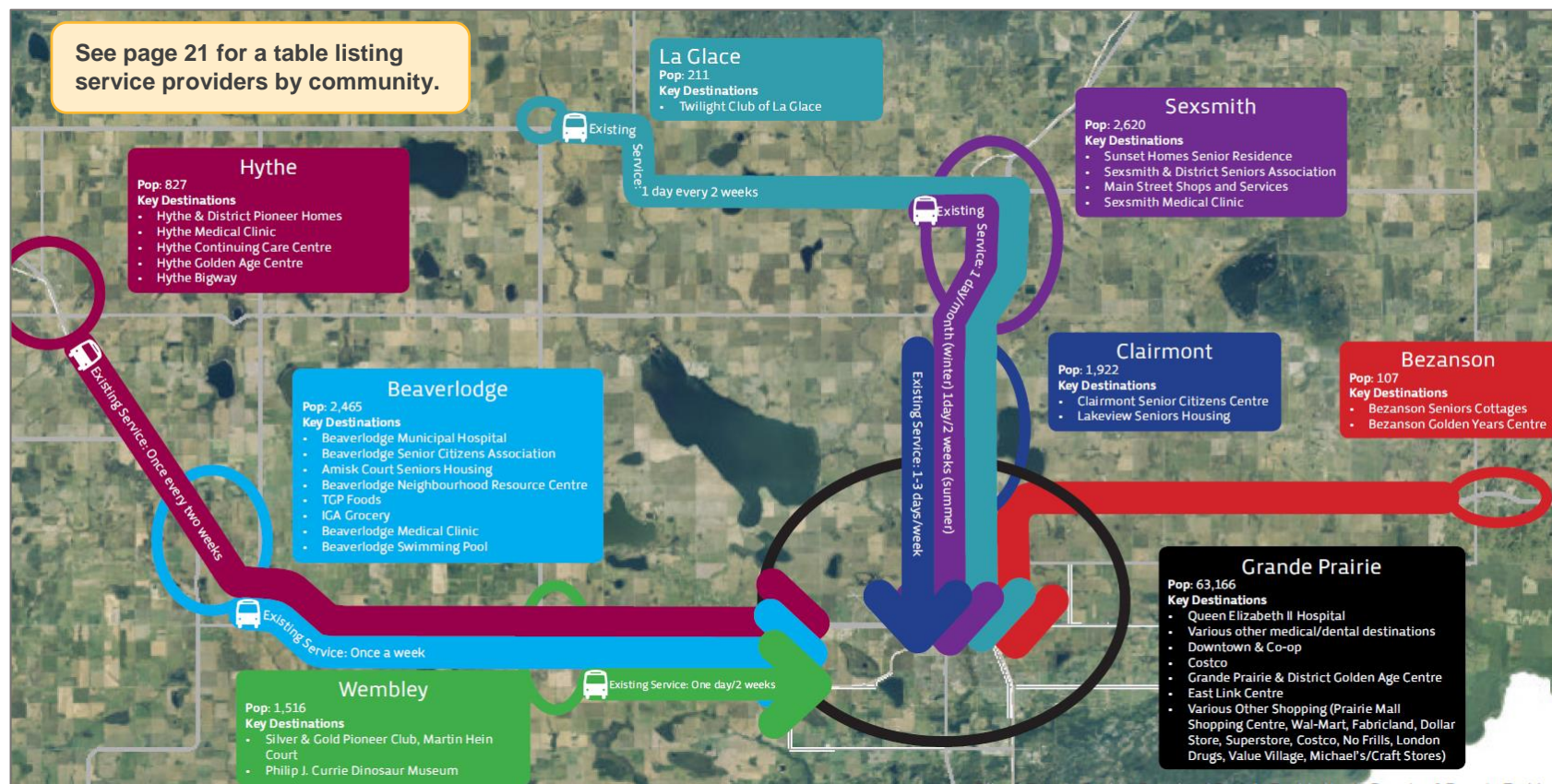
- Observations on travel patterns and areas of unmet service demand, such as difficulty accessing medical appointments or existing regional service pick up points.
- A lack of a standardized registration processes and publicly-available information for existing regional

Handibus services, as well as opportunities to improve dispatch and customer communication within the City.

- An assessment of existing service policies, fares, vehicle types, age/condition and storage facilities.

Further details on key transportation need, issues, and opportunities are presented in **Section 4.0**.

MAP OF GRANDE PRAIRIE REGION SHOWING KEY EXISTING HANDIBUS SERVICES AND TRAVEL DESTINATIONS



Service Options

Building from the identified issues and opportunities, existing travel patterns, and projected demand, several Handibus service options were developed for the Grande Prairie region.

Regional Handibus: Base Option

As shown in the map on the following page, the proposed introductory **Regional Handibus Base Option** is to offer one round trip two days per week along two corridors:

- The **Western corridor** would offer service between Hythe, Beaverlodge, Wembley and Grande Prairie.
- The **Northern corridor** would offer service between Sexsmith, Clairmont and Grande Prairie.

Eligibility: Service at designated points would be available to all residents, but all users would need to register with the service and book travel ahead of time. People with a disability would be eligible for door-to-door service within municipalities and County hamlets.

Locations: Within each community, the bus would serve the designated drop off/pick up points, plus door-to-door service for those who are eligible. Within the City of Grande Prairie, it would serve a variety of regular destinations, as well as on-request locations as booking time permits.

Regional Handibus: Augmented Options

Building onto this base, there is an opportunity to add additional service through further expansion, including:

- Additional day(s) of service.
- Additional round trip per day.
- Weekly extension to La Glace and Bezanson.
- Supplemental in-town/regional service by DTS.

Cost and ridership impacts for the base and augmented options are shown in the Option Summary table on page 9.

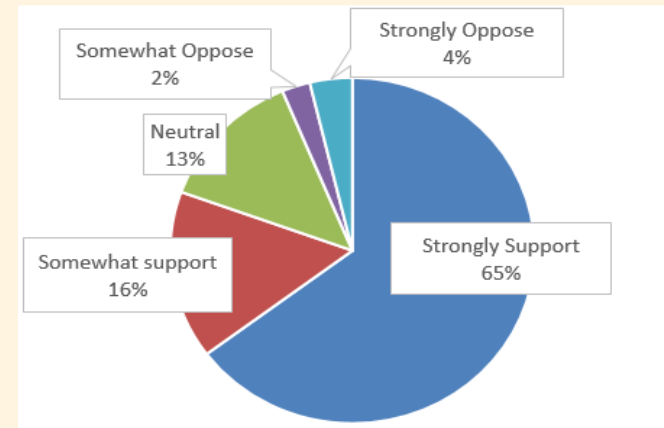
Retaining Flexibility – Special Group Trips

One key theme heard through the project’s public engagement was the desire by existing transportation service providers and users to retain the flexibility to organize special group trips for specific outings and social occasions.

Therefore, in addition to the regular Handibus trips that may be scheduled each week, it is proposed that:

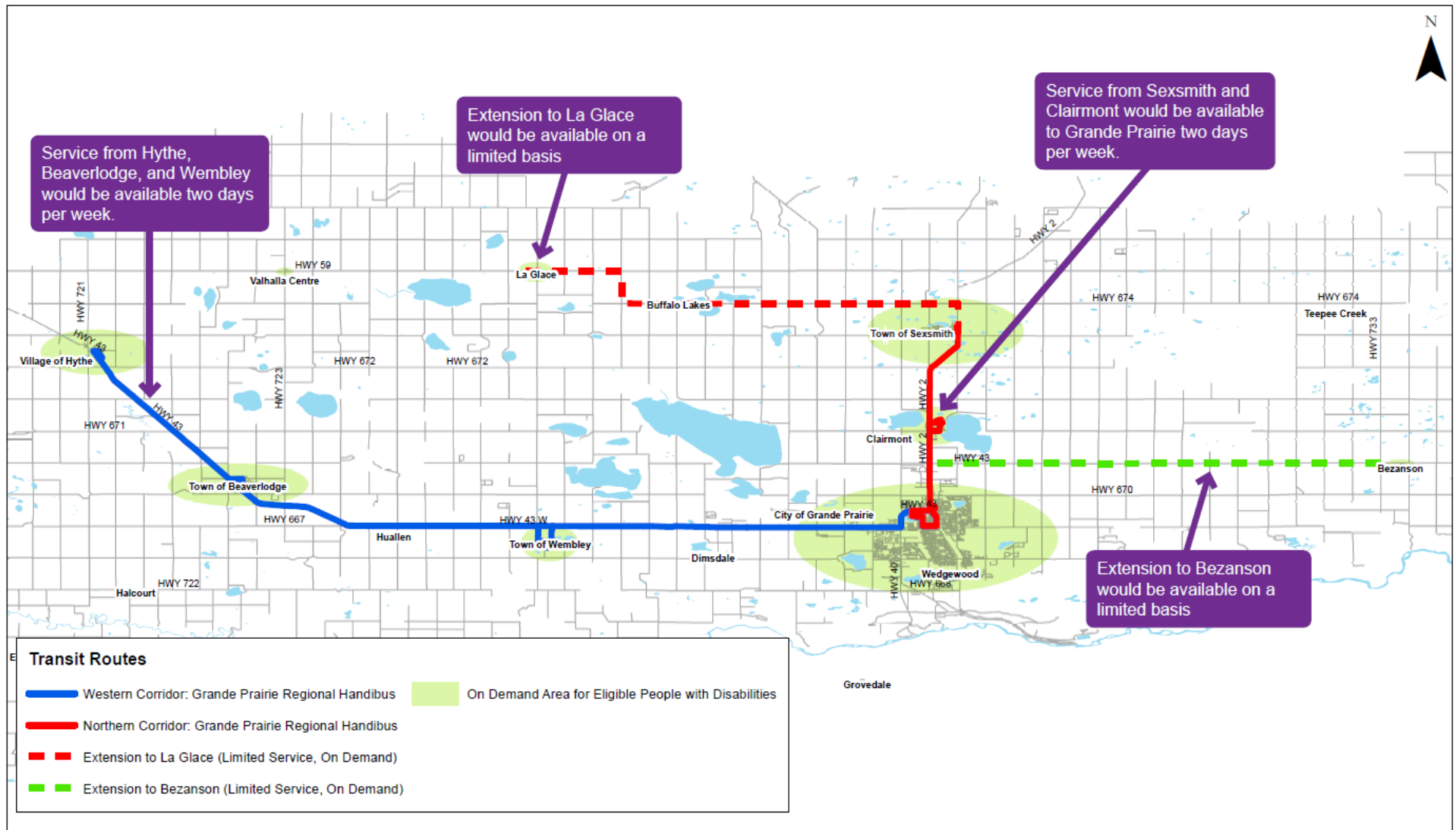
- **An annual budget of special event service hours be established** to facilitate additional services that may be advertised to the community and booked, such as Christmas lights tours or travel to community events or festivals.
- **A process, defined user fee and required operating authority** be implemented to enable citizens and groups to charter the Handibus vehicle.

In Focus: Support for Proposed Base Service Level



Overall level of support received across all surveys and open houses for the proposed base service proposal.

GRANDE PRAIRIE REGIONAL HANDIBUS FEASIBILITY STUDY – PROPOSED SERVICE DESIGN
MAP SHOWS BASE SERVICE OPTION (OPTION 1) AND POTENTIAL EXTENSIONS TO LA GLACE AND BEZANSON (OPTION 3)



Service Option Summary

The following presents high level, conservative financial and performance estimates for each of the service options. For comparison, the existing annual municipal subsidy by the County of Grande Prairie, Towns of Beaverlodge and Wembley and Village of Hythe in 2018 for areas covered by the Base Options presented is approximately \$97,000. Other financial assumptions are as follows:

- Costs are based on an average of 2018 actuals from the region and peer communities. A cost range is presented since the final selected service delivery model may affect travel time to the start of service and wage rate.
- Revenue assumes a proposed \$5 one-way cash fare, with ticket books at a 20% discount. (See **Section 8.2** for details).
- Vehicles shown assume ability to share fleet between the Northern and Western corridors. Depending on the service delivery model chosen, there may be an ability to use existing area vehicle assets in the near term. Capital purchase costs for a new 20 passenger accessible bus is approximately \$225,000.

Recommendation: If investment above the Base Options is desired, it is likely more advantageous to prioritize an additional day of Handibus service and coordinate with the potential Provincial Rural Transportation Program as a way of offering more trips per day.

GRANDE PRAIRIE REGIONAL HANDIBUS FEASIBILITY STUDY SERVICE OPTION SUMMARY: HIGH LEVEL ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL ANNUAL IMPACTS*

Service Option	Vehicles **	Annual Service Hours	Annual Rides	Annual Operating Costs		Annual Total Revenue	Annual Net Operating Costs	
				Low	High		Low	High
Base Options for Consideration								
Option 1a Base Option: Western Corridor, One Round Trip per Day, Two Days/Week	1	900	3,100	\$65,400	\$80,000	\$12,400	\$53,000	\$67,600
Option 1b Base Option: Northern Corridor, One Round Trip per Day, Two Days/Week	1	900	3,500	\$64,900	\$74,200	\$14,000	\$50,900	\$60,200
Option 2: Special Events Annual Budget	0	150	200	\$10,300	\$11,900	\$800	\$9,500	\$11,100
Base Option Total	2	1,950	6,800	\$140,600	\$166,100	\$27,200	\$113,400	\$138,900
Additional Expansion Options: Note That Amounts Shown ADD ON TO Those Shown for the Base Option								
Option 3: Extension to La Glace and Bezanson One Day per Week	0	200	300	\$13,800	\$15,800	\$1,200	\$12,600	\$14,600
Option 4: Western Corridor: Additional Round Trip per Day on Base Two Days/Week	0	500	1,500	\$34,500	\$39,600	\$6,000	\$28,500	\$33,600
Option 5: Northern Corridor: Additional Round Trip per Day on Base Two Days/Week	0	400	1,200	\$27,600	\$31,700	\$4,800	\$22,800	\$26,900
Option 6: Western Corridor: Additional Day of Service Per Week (One Round Trip/Day)	0	500	1,600	\$35,200	\$48,300	\$6,400	\$28,800	\$41,900
Option 7: Northern Corridor: Additional Day of Service Per Week (One Round Trip/Day)	0	400	1,300	\$27,600	\$31,700	\$5,200	\$22,400	\$26,500
Option 8: Further Shared Investment in DTS Service to Supplement Regional In-Town, Rural Service	1	1,600	3,800	\$113,100	\$129,700	\$10,600	\$102,500	\$119,100

Notes:

* Based on 2018 budgets and peer averages. Final costs may vary based on detailed budgets, year of implementation and final operational details.

** Except for Option 8—which requires a further vehicle—vehicle requirements shown are based on a model which shares one in-service vehicle and one spare vehicle between the Western and Northern Corridors. The feasibility of this may be impacted by the final service delivery model chosen. Likewise, this model assumes that service to the Western and Northern corridors would be operated on different days: operating them on the same day (such as if both corridors had 3 days/week service) would require an additional vehicle to what is shown here.

Service Delivery and Governance



Several models are available to support the service delivery and governance of improved regional transportation services for seniors and people with a disability. The most effective models may also change over time as services and supporting partnerships evolve. The following outlines service delivery and governance structures explored by the Handibus Feasibility Study and high-level recommendations.

Service Delivery

Service delivery refers to the management of service according to the goals and standards approved by the governance authority. The exact scope of service delivery can vary. The following options focus on operating functions delivered through contract, with system oversight addressed in Governance:

Service Delivery Model Options Explored:

- **Delivery Model Option 1 – Leveraged Status Quo:** Retain existing regional operating entities and assets and make use of them in a more coordinated manner.
- **Delivery Model Option 2 - Fully Regionally Operated:** Consolidate operation of regional services into one to two contracts with organizations situated in the larger region.
- **Delivery Model Option 3 – Centrally Operated:** Consolidate operation of regional services into one central contract with the DTS and/or City.
- **Delivery Model Option 4 – Hybrid A - Two Contracts:** Consolidate operation of regional services into two contracts: a regional entity (or consortium) for the Western corridor, and a centralized contract with DTS/City for the Northern.
- **Delivery Model Option 5 – Hybrid B – Centralized Support:** Builds on Option 2 or 4 and formally creates a structure for the City to support aspects of system oversight and all fleet services (maintenance, fueling, procurement).

Service Delivery Discussion:

Generally, operational efficiency and service consistency increases as operating contracts are consolidated. However, several factors make a centralized model less immediately applicable in the case of the Grande Prairie region:

- DTS internal reorganization presently underway and restricted capacity makes near term expansion less feasible.
- The distance from the City of Grande Prairie Service Centre vehicle garage to the potential Western corridor trip start in Hythe is fairly substantial and adds cost.

As all existing vehicles serving the Northern corridor operate out of the City of Grande Prairie site already, Delivery Option 1 or 4 is likely the best fit over the short term, with the opportunity to transition to Option 5 and potentially Option 3 at a future point.

Governance

Governance defines the highest-level decision-making and coordination for the system including setting direction, creating high-level goals, and providing oversight. The following models are elected official structures, ideally supported by designated municipal staff and/or staff-level coordinating group.

Governance Structure Options Explored:

- **Incorporated Separate Entity** - A separate legal entity is established with accountability to provide regional transit, such as a commission.
- **Committee-Based** - In this model, municipalities form an agreement to regionally collaborate on transit; decisions are discussed through a regional committee, all Council forum or other entity, with resulting recommendations referred to municipalities for formal approval.

Governance Discussion: Even if transitioning to a separate legal entity in the long term, many regional governance structures have found the Committee-Based approach successful as a starting point. In either case, governance must also clearly define staffing and resources to support the governance structure.

Key Recommendations and Suggested Path for Moving Forward

The following provides a summary of the Handibus Feasibility Study's key recommendations for improving mobility for those who have fewer transportation options in the Grande Prairie area, particularly seniors and disabled residents. The recommendations are listed in a suggested priority order based on their relative ease of implementation and the logical progression that other regions have used to successfully integrate and improve transit services across multiple jurisdictions and service providers. Further details are presented in **Section 10.0**.

Grande Prairie Regional Handibus Feasibility Study – Summary of Key Recommendations

1. **Municipal Regional Transportation Coordination** – Create a municipal staff-level Regional Transportation Working Group to investigate and guide next steps in a regional Handibus process and ensure alignment with any implementation of the Provincial Rural Transportation Pilot Project.
2. **Improve Monitoring Processes** – Consider collecting further performance information from existing larger Handibus operators in the region.
3. **Consolidate Public Information and Service Communication** – Collect, summarize and publicly post information on existing Handibus services operating in the region.
4. **Provide Guidance on Desired Registration Process** – Provide further guidance, samples and templates to assist larger existing Handibus service providers beyond the DTS in implementing client registration processes.
5. **Explore Further Partnership with Grande Spirit Foundation** – Work with the Grande Spirit Foundation to explore further opportunities to support the transportation that makes regional housing more viable, such as opportunity to increase taxation requisition to fund supporting Handibus transportation or support in kind, such as dispatch, registration or service communication.
6. **Create Structures to Improve Service Provider Consistency and Coordination** – Consider creating a Service Provider Working Group to share information and best practices among larger existing Handibus service providers.
7. **Consolidate Regional Fare and Eligibility Policies** – Leverage any fare or eligibility review that may take place in future to also consider regional fare/eligibility implications, such as in conjunction with any processes related to DTS services or the Provincial Rural Transportation Pilot Project.
8. **Implement Initial Service Improvements** – Implement initial service improvements by primarily reallocating existing resources and operating structures, such as coordination to share the existing Hythe and Wembley vehicles on the Western corridor and existing Grande Spirit Foundation and DTS resources on the Northern corridor.

Conclusions and Next Steps

The Grande Prairie Regional Handibus Feasibility Study outlines a path for the region's municipalities to provide seniors, people with a disability and others with improved service to meet existing and future transportation need.

The provision of improved connection makes it more feasible for residents to age in place, thereby supporting the ongoing stability and sustainability of smaller communities. There may also be opportunity to further leverage the benefits of regional Handibus through coordination with potential outcomes of the Provincial Rural Transportation Pilot Project.

As this study was undertaken based on a grant received by the Town of Wembley, the final report will be provided to the Town for its receipt. It is suggested the Town then circulate the final report to partner municipalities with a recommendation that:

- The report be the subject of a presentation to the next Intermunicipal Meeting in fall 2018 for discussion on next steps. Recognizing that current staff capacity to administer this project is limited and that the project may also be influenced by outcomes of the Provincial Rural Transportation Pilot Project, next steps may include:
 - Allocating sufficient resources and directing staff to form a Regional Transportation Staff Working Group to determine the preferred regional transportation governance and staffing approach, as well as fiscal and logistical implications of the consultant's report.
 - Requesting that the working group report back at a subsequent Intermunicipal Meeting by spring 2019.

In Focus: Other Considerations

Complementing the transit service options and recommendations presented in this Executive Summary, the full report also presents elements to support decision making.

These include:

- Performance comparison to **peer communities**.
- Summary of best practices for **setting fares** and potential **funding sources**, as well as typical **cost apportionment** methods.
- Policies to support the **coordination of Regional Handibus with other forms of travel**, including specialized and conventional transit services within the City of Grande Prairie and the potential Provincial Rural Transportation Pilot Project.
- **Guidance on regulatory frameworks**, including process for acquiring revised Alberta Transportation Operating Authority.
- **Discussion on supporting capital investments**, including vehicles, infrastructure and technology.
- **Recommended policies**, including registration, eligibility and performance monitoring.



1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Grande Prairie Regional Handibus Feasibility Study (“Handibus Feasibility Study”) focuses on identifying opportunities to improve mobility options primarily for seniors and disabled residents to attend to basic needs including medical and dental appointments, shopping, and social outings in the Grande Prairie region.

Funded through an Alberta Community Partnership grant obtained by the Town of Wembley, the study was undertaken through a partnership with the City of Grande Prairie, the County of Grande Prairie, the towns of Wembley, Beaverlodge and Sexsmith, and the Village of Hythe. The study was conducted by Watt Consulting Group in collaboration with these municipalities.

In line with the project goals defined at right, the study seeks to evaluate each community’s unique transportation needs, consider existing transportation services and resources, and present a path to effectively and efficiently improve transit service for seniors, people with a disability and others who may have transportation needs.

In particular, the study highlights opportunities where increased integration and coordination between area services and local governments can deliver even greater value to area residents.



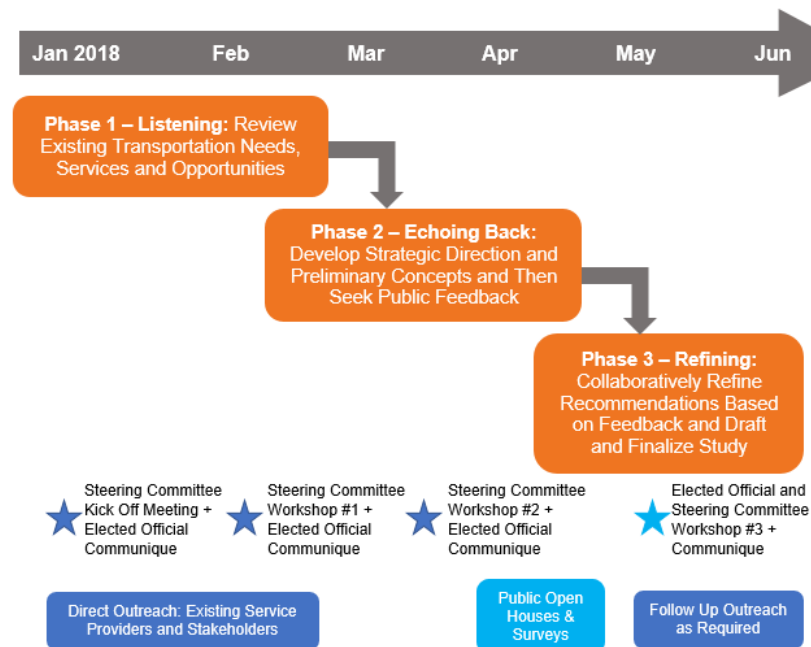
In Focus: Regional Handibus Study Goals

- Summarize area resident transportation needs and opportunities, with a **primary focus on the travel needs of seniors and people with a disability**.
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- Deliver a final report that describes **service types, options and associated cost and performance** projections.
- Provide guidance on **supporting operational aspects**, such as operating models, governance structures, fleet coordination, monitoring, marketing, fares and eligibility.
- Present options for **individual communities** in cases where a regional model may not be feasible.

1.1 Project Process, Involvement and Timeline

Undertaken from January to June 2018, the Regional Handibus Feasibility Study was guided by a Steering Committee made up of staff representatives from the six partner municipalities, with the City of Grande Prairie providing overall municipal project leadership.

GRANDE PRAIRIE REGIONAL HANDIBUS FEASIBILITY STUDY PROCESS & TIMELINE



As part of the first phase, (January 2018 – February, 2018), the project team conducted interviews with key local government staff, community stakeholders and existing transportation providers throughout the region to determine transportation needs, issues and opportunities. This outreach was supported by further analysis of existing transportation services, community plans and demographic trends.

In the second phase (March 2018 – May, 2018), the project team shared and refined these findings and preliminary service concepts through engagement with the general public, stakeholders and elected officials through a series of public open houses, community surveys and a workshop.

Four Steering Committee workshops were also conducted to shape the study process, recommendations and final report.

The Handibus Feasibility Study was also cognizant of an application made by area communities to the Alberta Rural Transportation Pilot Program, which if funded would focus on

fixed route service to designated stops. The two separate initiatives are being explored in a coordinated manner.

In Focus: Community Involvement

The Regional Handibus Feasibility Study process included involvement of the administrative staff, FCSS coordinators and elected officials of the partner municipalities: **Town of Wembley, City of Grande Prairie, County of Grande Prairie, Town of Beaverlodge, Town of Sexsmith and Village of Hythe.**

It also included direct outreach to the staff and representatives of the following organizations: Alberta Health Services • Amisk Court Social Club • Beaverlodge Hidden Potential Society • Beaverlodge Municipal Hospital • Beaverlodge Seniors Citizens Association • Disabled Transportation Society of Grande Prairie • Bezanson Golden Years Club • Grande Prairie and District Golden Age Centre • Grande Prairie Alberta Supports Centre • Grande Spirit Foundation • Grande Prairie Adult Day Program • Hythe and District Pioneer Home • Horse Lake First Nation • Hythe Golden Age Centre • Lakeview Seniors Housing • Peace Area Riding for the Disabled Society • Sexsmith and District Seniors Association • Sexsmith Spinal Cord Injury Alberta • Sunset Homes and Tenants Association • Silver & Gold Pioneer Club of Wembley • Twilight Club of La Glace • Wolverines Wheelchair Sports Association

1.2 Community Engagement

In addition to direct outreach to municipal staff, existing transportation providers in the region and stakeholder organizations, the Handibus Feasibility Study conducted a series of community engagement activities. The focus of this engagement was to confirm travel patterns, needs and opportunities as well as collect feedback on preliminary service options, fares and customer information recommendations.

Attended and supported by many project Steering Committee members and elected officials as well, the community engagement process took place in April 2018 and included:

- **Seven open houses** held at key seniors and community locations in the six partner communities on April 10-11, 2018. (See next page for a selection of photos from these events).
- **An online survey** posted on the project website **and paper surveys** distributed through stakeholder organizations from April 3-25, 2018.
- **Complementing outreach and promotion of the project and engagement opportunities** through multiple media releases, social media posts and direct emails and outreach to community stakeholders.

In Focus: Engagement by the Numbers

145 Open house attendees

129 Open house sticky dots

75+ Open house sticky notes

159 Survey responses



In addition to the scheduled open houses, Town of Wembley staff also included the open house materials and surveys as part of a Wembley civic event the evening of April 11, 2018.

While the number of participants varied at each open house venue—and the mix of large group presentation and/or small table conversations varied to accommodate this—overall the study project team was very happy with the depth of discussion and conversation that occurred at each location and across the region, as well as the many thoughtful and detailed survey responses.

Engagement results were used to develop and refine the discussion and recommendations within this Study and results are highlighted in applicable sections throughout.

A SELECTION OF PHOTOS FROM PROJECT OPEN HOUSE EVENTS



Grande Prairie



Wembley



Hythe



Beaverlodge



Sexsmith



Clairmont

Grande Prairie Regional Handibus Study



Do you rely on a handibus to attend appointments and outings?

Do you wish to have a handibus service and don't?

Tell us what you think!

If you answered yes, please provide input on your transportation needs at one of these area open houses!

Grande Prairie Regional Handibus Feasibility Study Open Houses			
Tuesday, April 10	9:00am – 10:30am	Grande Prairie	Rotary Community Room, Montrose Cultural Centre, 9839 103 Ave.
	11:30am – 1:00pm	Wembley	Silver & Gold Pioneer Club, 9816 101 St.
	1:30pm – 3:00pm	Hythe	Hythe & District Pioneer Home, 10103 100 St.
	3:30pm – 5:00pm	Beaverlodge	Neighbourhood Resource Centre, 400-10th St.
Wednesday, April 11	9:00am – 10:30am	Grande Prairie	Grande Prairie & District Golden Age Centre, 10222 101 Ave.
	11:30am – 1:00pm	Sexsmith	Sexsmith & District Seniors Association (Sunset Homes), 9702 97 Ave.
	2:00pm – 3:30pm	Clairmont	Clairmont Senior Citizens Centre, 9801 100 Ave.

We look forward to hearing your thoughts on what a regional handibus program could look like. We'll also be sharing preliminary ideas we've developed.

Light refreshments to be served.



You can also view proposals and share your thoughts online starting April 3 at www.cityofgp.com/handibusstudy.

About the Project:

The City of Grande Prairie, County of Grande Prairie, Towns of Wembley, Beaverlodge, and Sexsmith, and the Village of Hythe have partnered on a project to determine the feasibility of a regional handibus service.

The goal of this initiative, being undertaken by Watt Consulting Group, is improving mobility options primarily for seniors and disabled residents attending to basic needs such as medical and dental appointments, shopping, and social outings. For more information, please contact HandibusStudy@wattconsultinggroup.com



Poster advertising Regional Handibus Study open houses and survey.

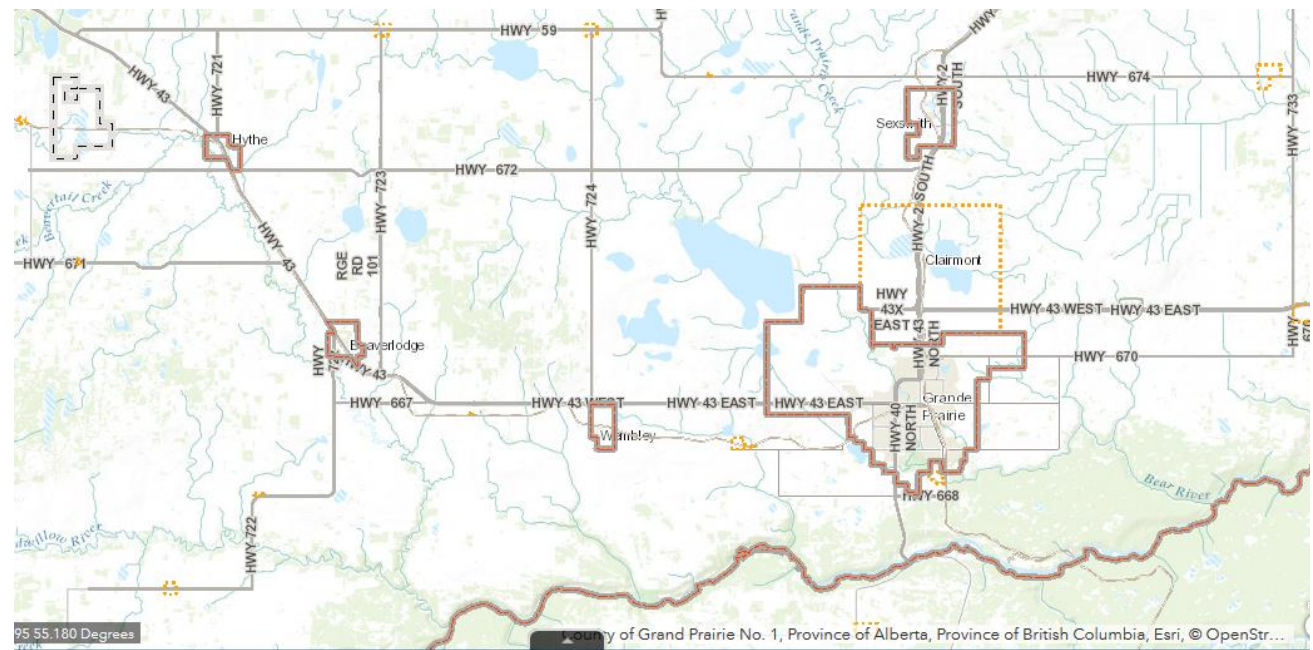
2.0 COMMUNITY CONTEXT

2.1 Community Overview and Population

The partner municipalities in this study are located in the region surrounding the City of Grande Prairie, the main service centre for the area. Besides the City itself, the partners include the Village of Hythe, Town of Beaverlodge and Town of Wembley located to the west of Grande Prairie on Hwy 43 and the Town of Sexsmith to the north on Hwy 2. Surrounding all these areas is the County of Grande Prairie No. 1 (“County of Grande Prairie”), which encompasses rural areas and several hamlets. Horse Lake First Nation is located to the west of Hythe and is the other population centre in the area.

At the direction of the project Steering Committee, the study area encompassed the municipal boundaries of the City of Grande Prairie, Towns of Wembley, Beaverlodge and Sexsmith, and Village of Hythe. It also included the County corridors connecting these communities, as well as the

more populated County hamlets of Clairmont, La Glace and Bezanson. Horse Lake First Nation was also included in this project and contacted as part of key stakeholder outreach and so its demographic information has also been included in this section.



Regional Handibus Feasibility Study community scope and location. (Source: County of Grande Prairie)

2.2 Area Population and Demographic Trends

The following tables summarize population for study-area communities. Population is grouped into age categories that roughly align with typical transit customer market types.

The upper table compares the total Grande Prairie region population with that of the Albertan population, while the tables on the next page show details for each of the municipalities, plus the Horse Lake First Nation.

Other data referenced from the *Canadian Survey on Disabilities* (Census Canada, 2012) **indicated that 12.5% of individuals aged 15 and over have one or more disabilities in Alberta.** The prevalence of disability is shown to increase as individuals grow older, as 35.7% of the group aged 65 have one or more disabilities.

Beyond the overall growth in population for the area the information in the tables show:

- The proportion of **older seniors** aged 75 years and over is increasing at a faster rate in the Grande Prairie region than in the province (21% versus 13%). This 75+ age category is often when transit need tends to increase due to declines in mobility or cognitive function or ability/desire to drive.
- While in terms of real numbers the population is not large, this higher proportion of growth in older seniors is evident in the City of Grande Prairie (24%), the Village of Hythe

(24%) and the County of Grande Prairie (17%).

- The growth of **younger seniors** aged 60-74 years in the Grande Prairie region is slightly higher than in the Province of Alberta. The City of Grande Prairie, Town of Wembley, and Town of Sexsmith have been experiencing a higher rate of growth in this category (42%, 53% and 58%, respectively), with growth in the other municipalities similar to or below the Province's growth rate (26%).
- This population group tends to rely more heavily on automobiles and can be less likely to take transit. However, the growth in this group is a predictor of future accessible transit need.
- This group tends to be more amenable to taking transit for longer distances, particularly in winter. Continuing to improve and promote regional transit services can be a way to build a "transit habit" that encourages use of transit locally, particularly as they age.

AREA POPULATION COMPARISONS BY TYPICAL TRANSIT MARKET AGE GROUPINGS Comparison of Study Region to Alberta

Characteristics	Alberta					Grande Prairie Region Total				
	2011	2016	% 2011	% 2016	% Change	2011	2016	% 2011	% 2016	% Change
Total private dwellings	1,505,007	1,654,129	-	-	10%	33,369	37,506	-	-	12%
Total Population	3,645,257	4,067,175	-	-	12%	83,390	93,366	-	-	12%
Average age of the population	-	37.8	-	-	-	0	34.133	-	-	-
Population by Age Group										
0 to 14 years	684,790	779,155	19%	19%	14%	18,020	20,960	22%	22%	16%
15 to 24 years	496,680	501,865	14%	12%	1%	12,565	12,240	15%	13%	-3%
25 to 59 years	1,875,900	2,059,705	51%	51%	10%	43,395	48,585	52%	52%	12%
60 to 74 years	402,635	516,945	11%	13%	28%	6,265	8,530	8%	9%	36%
75 years and over	185,250	209,505	5%	5%	13%	2,505	3,040	3%	3%	21%

- Other younger population segments are not within traditional “seniors” categories but may include people with a disability or residents with transportation need, such as youth or lower income adults. Their population composition and trends are as follows:
 - The growth in **adults** aged 25-59 years in the Grande Prairie region is in line with that of the Province (12% versus 10%). This largest change in this age group was in the Village of Hythe (a 12% decrease).
 - The population of youth aged 15 to 24 is shrinking (-3%) in the Grande Prairie region. The growth of youth in the Province has not shrunk, but also has not increased significantly (1%). The largest contraction in this age group occurs in the Town of Sexsmith (-12%).

- The growth in **children** aged 0-14 years is slightly higher than in the Province (16% vs 14%) and is also proportionally higher. In particular, the Horse Lake First Nation’s youth demographic is the largest age group in its population (38%), followed by the Town of Sexsmith (30%) and the Town of Wembley (26%).

Population Key Conclusions

- The proportion of both older and younger seniors is growing at a faster rate in the Grande Prairie region than Alberta. These trends, in conjunction with the overall estimates for people with disabilities across all age categories, indicates an existing demand for Handibus in the region that will only grow as younger seniors age.
- The growth in the number of children in some regional communities also has implications for transit. While not thought of as a traditional “Handibus” market, these children indicate future youth markets that will seek transit service of some kind.

Comparison by Area Municipality / First Nation

Characteristics	City of Grande Prairie					County of Grande Prairie					Town of Sexsmith				
	2011	2016	2011	2016	Change	2011	2016	2011	2016	Change	2011	2016	2011	2016	Change
Total private dwellings	22,979	26,204	-	-	14%	7,620	8,291	-	-	9%	807	937	-	-	16%
Total Population	55,655	63,166	-	-	13%	20,347	22,303	-	-	10%	2,418	2,620	-	-	8%
Average age of the population	-	33.5	-	-	-	-	36.1	-	-	-	-	30.7	-	-	-
Population by Age Group															
0 to 14 years	11,665	13,700	21%	22%	17%	4,435	5,195	22%	23%	16%	685	785	28%	30%	15%
15 to 24 years	8,930	8,700	16%	14%	-3%	2,615	2,585	13%	12%	-1%	345	305	14%	12%	-12%
25 to 59 years	29,335	33,800	53%	54%	15%	10,560	11,145	52%	50%	6%	1,225	1,280	51%	49%	4%
60 to 74 years	3,505	4,970	6%	8%	42%	2,120	2,740	10%	12%	29%	130	205	5%	8%	58%
75 years and over	1,595	1,985	3%	3%	24%	545	635	3%	3%	17%	40	45	2%	2%	13%

Characteristics	Town of Beaverlodge					Town of Wembley					Village of Hythe					Horse Lake FN				
	2011	2016	2011	2016	Change	2011	2016	2011	2016	Change	2011	2016	2011	2016	Change	2011	2016	2011	2016	Change
Total private dwellings	981	1,024	-	-	4%	542	618	-	-	14%	329	320	-	-	-3%	111	112	-	-	1%
Total Population	2,365	2,465	-	-	4%	1,383	1,516	-	-	10%	820	827	-	-	1%	402	469	-	-	17%
Average age of the population	-	38.4	-	-	-	-	32.2	-	-	-	-	44.9	-	-	-	-	25.1	-	-	-
Population by Age Group																				
0 to 14 years	530	550	22%	22%	4%	345	395	25%	26%	14%	140	155	17%	19%	11%	160	180	40%	38%	13%
15 to 24 years	305	280	13%	11%	-8%	180	180	13%	12%	0%	105	105	13%	13%	0%	85	85	21%	18%	0%
25 to 59 years	1,065	1,100	45%	45%	3%	735	785	53%	52%	7%	345	305	42%	37%	-12%	130	170	32%	36%	31%
60 to 74 years	295	345	12%	14%	17%	85	130	6%	9%	53%	110	115	13%	14%	5%	20	25	5%	5%	25%
75 years and over	170	190	7%	8%	12%	30	25	2%	2%	-17%	125	155	15%	19%	24%	0	5	0%	1%	-

2.3 Community Planning Framework

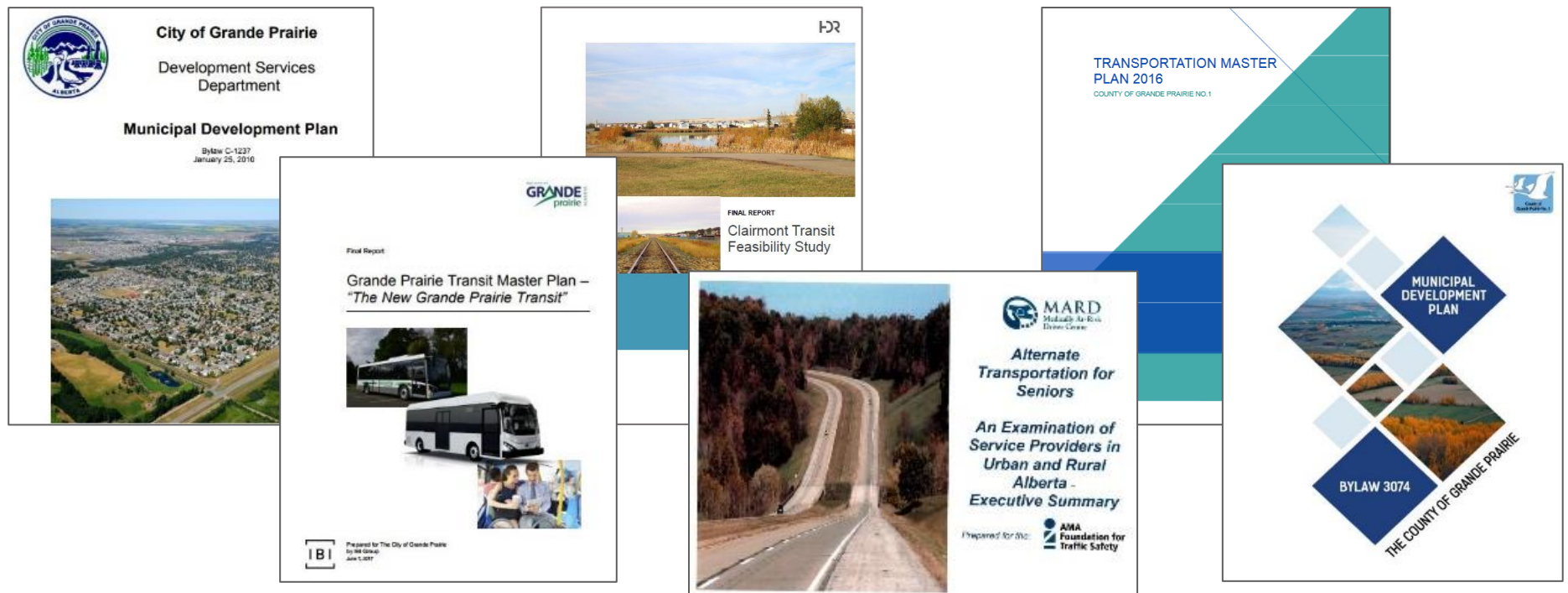
Established community policies, plans, and strategies from partner municipalities provide the framework for transit and direction on how best to develop specialized service to complement larger objectives.

The Regional Handibus Feasibility Study process reviewed applicable community documents to determine overarching community policies and objectives for transit in the Grande Prairie region, particularly elements guiding land use, areas of future development and transportation.

Types of documents reviewed included Municipal Development Plans, Sustainability Strategies, Transportation Master Plans and past transit studies where they existed.

Community Planning Framework Key Conclusions

- While many of the community plans had broad policy goals of retaining overall citizen mobility or increasing community sustainability, there was often no or only very limited reference to transit.
- Municipalities can support transit by considering the following as part of any community plan updates:
 - Policies that explicitly relate provision of transit to community health, citizen equity and economic development goals.
 - Policies and priorities which focus higher density development (relative to each municipality's own local scale) close to existing community services and built up areas.



3.0 EXISTING TRANSPORTATION SERVICES AND TRAVEL DEMAND

3.1 Overview of Existing Transportation Services

More than a dozen organizations currently contribute to the provision of transportation within the Grande Prairie region.

Within the City of Grande Prairie, transportation serving the needs of seniors and people with a disability includes the fixed route public transit service the City operates plus specialized services operated by the Disabled Transportation Society of Grande Prairie (DTS).

In the region surrounding the City, many existing service providers serve aspects of transportation need within their communities and organizations, as shown in the table below and the map on the following page.

The organizations shown receive funding from the County of Grande Prairie's Seniors and Special Needs Transportation Operating Assistance Grant program. While in some cases funding goes towards reimbursing volunteer drivers transporting individuals (such as the Wolverines Wheelchair Sports Association and the Beaverlodge Hidden Potential

Society, not shown in the table), seven communities already have Handibus services that operate regularly to and from Grande Prairie and other locations. These services vary in frequency from once per week (Beaverlodge), to twice per month (Hythe, Wembley) and once per month (Sexsmith, La Glace), with a slightly higher frequency provided as needed to Clairmont.

Horse Lake First Nation also operates its own shuttle on request by its residents. When contacted by the Study, Nation staff indicated this arrangement is meeting community needs.

As discussed further in **Section 4.0** Issues and Opportunities, these existing services are meeting some needs but there is a larger unmet demand, particularly for medical-related trips.

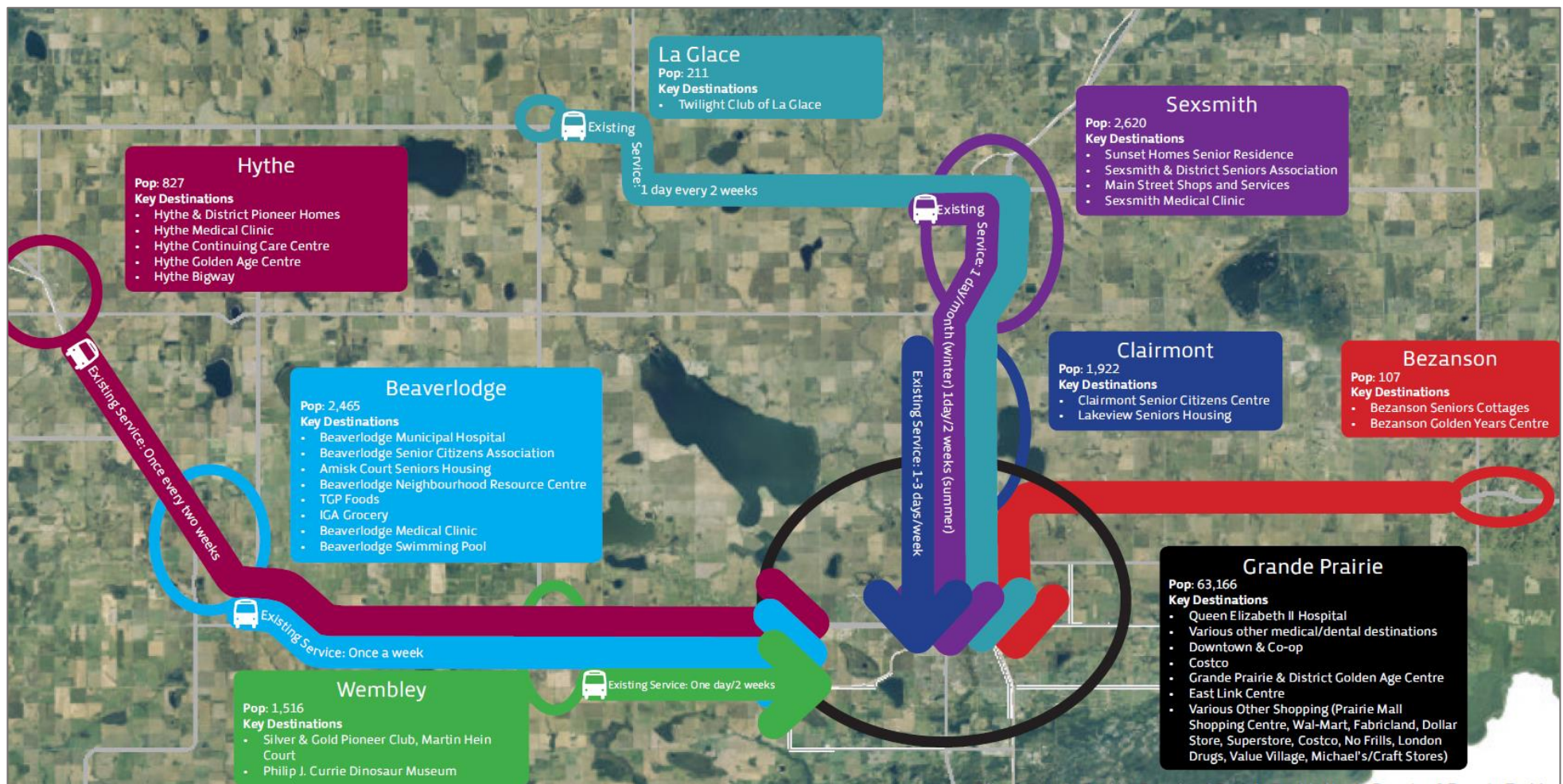
Also, many residents are relying on family, social workers/caregivers and other means (paid drivers, taxis) that may not be socially or financially sustainable.

EXISTING REGULARLY SCHEDULED REGIONAL SERVICES TO/FROM CITY OF GRAND PRAIRIE							
Community	Beaverlodge	Bezanson	Clairmont	Hythe	La Glace	Sexsmith	Wembley
Operating Organization(s)	Town of Beaverlodge / Beaverlodge Seniors Citizens Association / Amisk Court	Bezanson Golden Years Club	Disabled Transportation Society of Grande Prairie + Grande Spirit Foundation	Hythe and District Pioneer Home / Hythe Golden Age Craft Centre	Twilight Club of La Glace	Grande Spirit Foundation / Sexsmith and District Pioneer Home / Sexsmith Sunset Homes and Tenant Association	Silver & Gold Pioneer Club of Wembley
2016 Ridership	970	290	672	409	120	1,894	160
Frequency of Trips to/from Grande Prairie	One day per week	Information not available	One to three days per week	One day every two weeks	One day every two weeks	One day per month (winter); one day every two weeks (summer)	One day every two weeks
Additional Services	Based on demand	Information n/a	Capped to 20hrs/week	n/a	Based on demand	Based on demand	Based on demand

3.2 Operating Details and Destinations by Community

The following map illustrates existing regional Handibus services by community. It also shows the location of major destinations that are responsible for much of the travel demand, including larger regional housing developments focused on seniors or people with a disability or significant medical, recreational and shopping destinations.

MAP OF GRANDE PRAIRIE REGION SHOWING KEY EXISTING HANDIBUS SERVICES AND TRAVEL DESTINATIONS



3.3 Key Existing Travel Patterns

Public engagement and conversations with existing service providers determined the following:

- While most travel is from the communities surrounding Grande Prairie into the City for services, there is also some travel between communities, particularly on the Western corridor linking Hythe, Beaverlodge, Wembley and Grande Prairie.
- As described further below, the most common frequency of travel for the top destinations is one to two days per week.
- The location of seniors housing outside the City is having a growing impact on transportation need. For instances, existing Handibus services to Clairmont/Seixsmith and Hythe were also those most frequently experiencing lack of capacity.
- Likewise, several communities have experienced a loss of key amenities—such as a grocery store closure in Wembley—which are also contributing to travel patterns and transportation need.

In Focus: Engagement Results - Key Regional Travel Destinations and Frequency

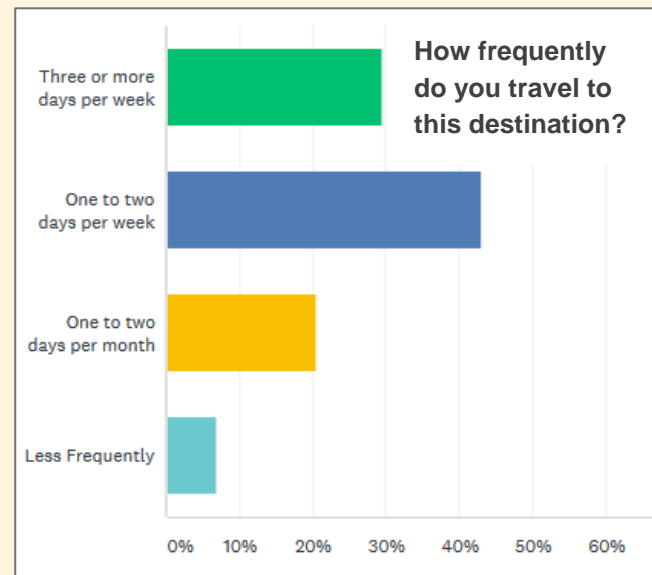
As part of public engagement open houses and surveys, respondents were asked to provide information on their top five travel destinations and their frequency of travel to each.

The word cloud below summarizes the most common destinations cited by respondents via project engagement. Larger words correspond to higher frequency of responses. The chart at right shows the frequency of travel for the top destinations.

Most frequent destinations



How frequently
do you travel to
this destination?



3.4 Existing Fare Structures

A number of fare structures are already in place within the Grande Prairie region and vary widely in terms of how they are expressed. The following table summarizes the fare structures at a very high level to enable general comparison between services.

OVERVIEW OF EXISTING FARES IN GRANDE PRAIRIE REGION								
Fare Type	Grande Prairie Transit		DTS	Hythe	Beaverlodge	Wembley	Clairmont / Sexsmith	La Glace / Bezanson
	Adult	Senior / Student						
One Way Cash Fare	\$2.00	\$1.50	\$3.00	\$2.50	\$2.50	\$2.50	\$5.00	No charge*
Tickets (Book of 10)	\$17	\$8.50 / \$13.60	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tickets (Book of 20)	\$28	\$14 / \$22.40	\$40	-	-	-	-	-
Monthly Pass	\$54	\$27 / \$43	\$65	-	-	-	-	-
Notes:	Pass Pak (bundle of four monthly passes) also available: \$162 adults, \$81 seniors, \$129 students.		Must also pay annual membership of \$30; \$25 if prior to Dec. 31; \$15 per trip for non-members.					*Membership in La Glace Twilight Club is \$2 a year which covers bus transportation costs.

Key observations about the current fare structures include:

- Fares and distance are not currently aligned, since passengers travelling the greatest distance (Hythe, Beaverlodge, Wembley) have the lowest fares while those living in Clairmont/Sexsmith pay highest fares.
- Comparative fares for other nearby regional services (see right) is closer to \$5 (or more) one way.
- DTS fares for service to Clairmont currently varies depending on trip purpose (\$3 for medical trips, \$5 for other) and many Clairmont public engagement participants said they would prefer a single rate.
- The discount applied to tickets within the City is greater than the 10-20% discount more commonly applied in Canadian transit systems.

In Focus: Other Fare Comparisons as Background

One-way cash fares on other nearby specialized transit services:

- Leduc or Fort Saskatchewan to Edmonton: \$5
- Spruce Grove or Stony Plain to Edmonton: \$15
- Anzac, Fort McKay to Fort McMurray: \$10 adults, \$5 students, seniors free

Rate of current discount on transit tickets for services within City of Grande Prairie:

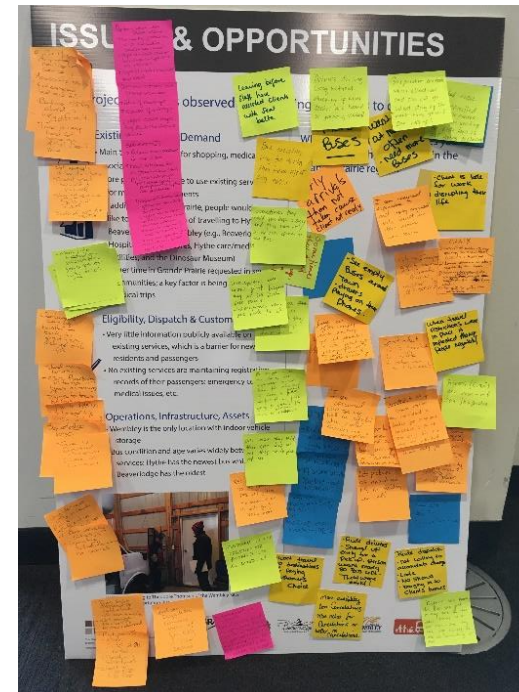
- Grande Prairie Transit Seniors: 10 rides for price of 5.7 (43% discount)
- DTS: 10 rides for price of 6.7 (33% discount)

4.0 ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

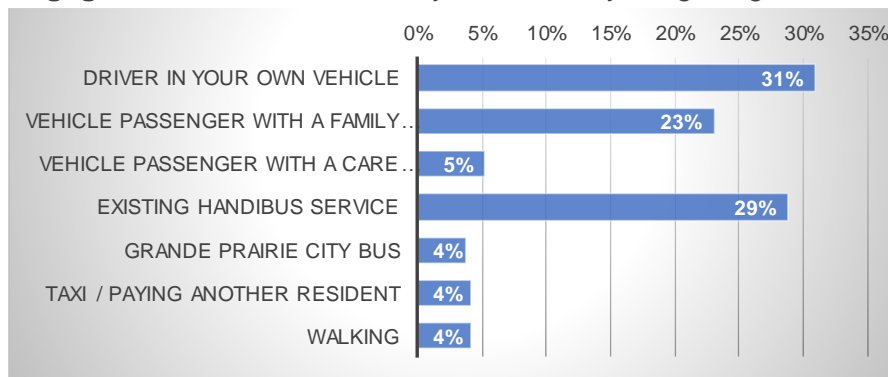
4.1 Current Gaps and Areas of Overlap

As shown in the chart below, participants who attended the public engagement open houses and completed the surveys are using a variety of means for getting around.

- **A majority still drive their own vehicle.** However, many of these respondents expressed a strong desire for Handibus to avoid driving in winter weather, to benefit from the social aspects of taking the bus or to ensure a viable alternative if declining health impacts their ability to drive.
- Beyond those taking existing Handibus services, there is a **strong reliance on family** to fill existing transportation gaps.
- Many users in areas outside of Grande Prairie are also **paying taxis and private individuals** for transportation to/from the City at costs ranging from \$40-\$80 round trip.



Engagement results: What are your main ways of getting around?



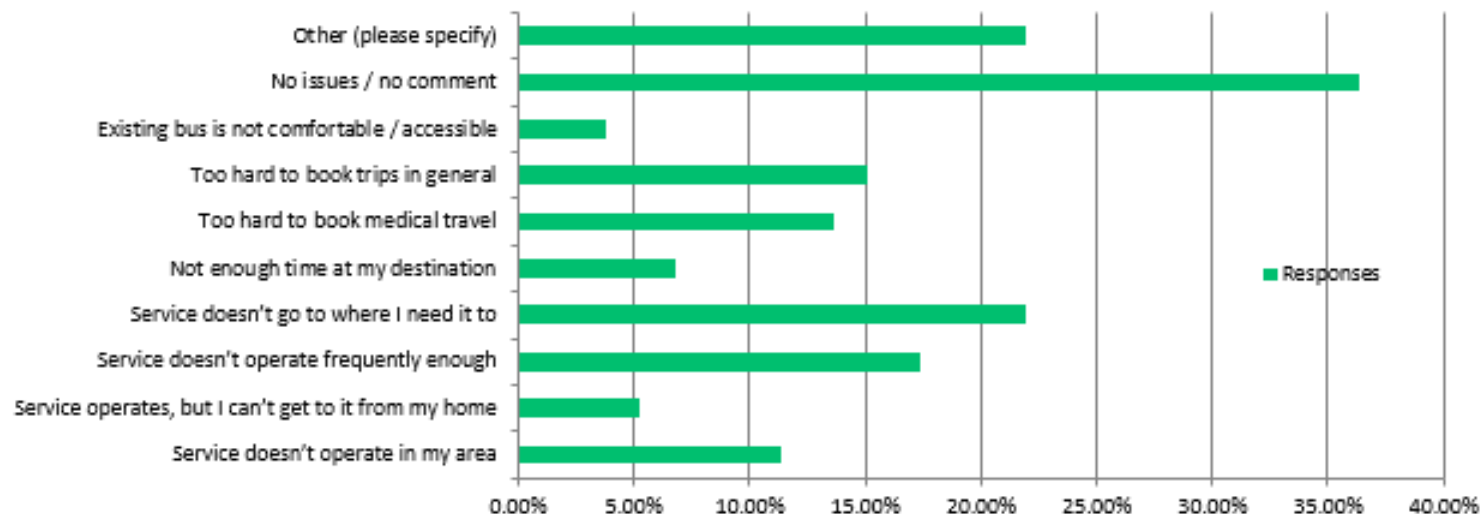
In terms of key challenges to current travel, some of the most commonly identified issues included:

- **Service Coverage** - Service not operating in the participants' area or not going where they need it to.
 - Besides lack of more regular Handibus service in regional communities, respondent comments also often mentioned the desire for more clarity on which areas of the County immediately adjacent to the City are served by existing DTS Handibus.
- **Scheduling Concerns** – Service not operating frequently enough or not enough time provided at destinations.
 - Service operating not frequently enough was most commonly heard in communities like Hythe,

Wembley and Sexsmith where existing Handibus service operates less than once a week.

- **Access Concerns** – Issues with either booking trips in general as well as physical inability to get to service.
 - Difficulties with booking trips in general was most commonly heard from existing Handibus clients within the City. In the surrounding communities, examples of access concerns included wheelchair users not being able to get to their Handibus central pick up point.
- **Vehicle Comfort and Amenities** – Concerns about vehicle condition and in some cases lack of accessible features, such leaking windows or lack of handrails on seat backs.

What are the key challenges to travel you experienced in the Grande Prairie region? Select up to three



4.2 Opportunities for Increased Coordination

One prominent theme that emerges from the analysis of existing transportation services within the Grande Prairie region is there is considerable overlap.

These areas of overlap include:

- **Multiple services within similar corridors**, since Handibus trips from individual communities are passing each other by when travelling to and from the City.
- **Service delivery resources**, including multiple dispatchers/administrative staff, policies and scheduling/dispatch processes.
- **Support resources from sponsoring municipalities and non-profits**, including staff and volunteer time spent planning and organizing the multiple services and undertaking vehicle procurement and maintenance.
- **Capital infrastructure**, since vehicles are deployed separately with only a minimal amount of sharing between services and separate locations are used to store and maintain vehicles.

While on the one hand the number of organizations involved in regional transportation shows the amount of duplication between services, **on the other hand it also shows an existing local level of comfort with partnerships and a diverse base of knowledge and resources.**

These pre-existing conditions demonstrate a strong foundation for Grande Prairie area communities to consider how current resources might be deployed differently through increased coordination and integration. This integration can span a range of activities, as described in the graphic at right.

While some of these integration activities encompass more intensive service delivery or governance changes (discussed in **Section 7.0**), many improvements to items like improved customer information and coordination of services and policies can work within existing operating structures and be primarily coordinated through staff-level working groups. Recommendations presented in later sections of this Study take these diverse opportunities for increased integration and coordination into account.

In Focus: The Spectrum of Transit Integration

Increasing Degree of
Coordination Required



4.3 Summary of Key Opportunities

Based on analysis and outreach, the study process determined the following key issues and opportunities:

Transportation Demand



- Main reasons for regional travel for seniors and people with a disability are for shopping, medical and social/recreational trips.



- More people would like to use existing services for medical appointments. A main barrier to this is the short length of time in Grande Prairie on current services (particularly Beaverlodge's), as well as infrequency of service for other locations.



- In addition to accessing services and amenities in Grande Prairie, there was also some demand for travel to destinations on the Western corridor of Wembley, Beaverlodge and Hythe. (e.g., Beaverlodge Hospital, grocery stores, Hythe care/medical facilities, and the Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum).



- Many of the existing services use centralized pick up points, which may not be easily accessed by people with a disability, particularly in winter.

Eligibility, Dispatch and Customer Information



- Very little information is publicly available on existing services, which is a barrier for new residents and passengers.
- Other than the DTS, no existing services are maintaining registration records of their passengers: emergency contact, medical issues, etc.
- For specialized services operating within the City of Grande Prairie, issues relating to dispatch, customer communication, and missed and late trips are in the process of being addressed.
- There are opportunities to further promote the fully accessible conventional transit system within the City, as well as to consider a notification process or system for when the Handibus is arriving.

Operations, Infrastructure, Assets



- Wembley, La Glace and Grande Prairie are the only locations with indoor vehicle storage.
- Bus condition and age varies widely between services: Hythe has the newest bus while Beaverlodge has the oldest.

5.0 SERVICE CONCEPTS

Building from the analysis of community plans and demographics and identified issues and opportunities, this section describes potential service design types that may be used to provide transit service in the region, as well as other potential non-transit forms of supporting transportation.

5.1 The Transit “Toolbox” - Service Design Types

Transit system design draws from a suite of service types. These range based on the degree that service is fixed or flexible. The difference between fixed and flexible is summarized as follows:

- **Fixed route services** – operate using a published schedule and route map with set bus stops (for example, such as the existing conventional transit system within the City of Grande Prairie)
- **Flexible demand responsive services** – offer service to specific locations and times as need arises (such as the specialized transit services operated by the DTS within the City).

Between these two ends of the spectrum, there are a number of other possibilities which encompass many of the other existing Handibus services in the Grande Prairie region.

Each of these service design types may be used to serve specific community needs based on expected ridership and commonality of travel patterns, the land use and layout of communities and the level of physical mobility for

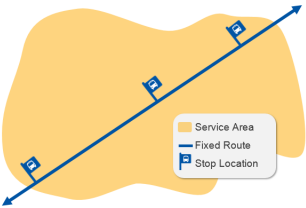
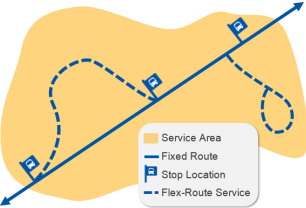
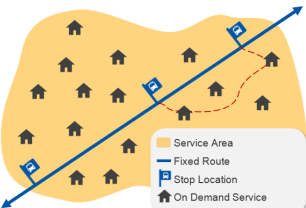
In Focus: Transit Service Design Principles

Service options developed for this project are based on the following transit service design best practice principles.

- Where feasible, **be as consistent as possible** as consistency across services (including policies, routes, schedules and fares) is usually easier to understand and attracts higher ridership.
- **Ensure accessibility**: while different services may target different passenger markets, transit service design, infrastructure, vehicles and policies should overall work together to serve all ages, abilities and economic backgrounds.
- Rather than treating all areas equally, **focus highest levels of service on corridors that have greater population density** (relative to their surrounding rural or urban contexts) and major destinations.
- If specific passengers or destinations require closer access to transit, **consider options which layer and combine different types of service together**.
- Where possible, **build from existing transportation patterns and providers** and consider an incremental approach. For instance, this may mean seeking approaches that use existing resources in new ways and feathering in substantial changes over a series of improvements.

passengers. They may also be layered together. Using several different types has advantages since services that are more “fixed” in terms of either routing or schedule will normally carry more passengers for a lower cost than fully demand responsive options but will not meet all community needs.

As a foundation for the proposed service options and supporting measures presented in subsequent sections, the following table provides an overview of the palette of service design types that could be applied in the Grande Prairie region.

THE TRANSIT “TOOLBOX”: GENERAL TRANSIT SERVICE DESIGN TYPES			
Service Type	Description	Notes and Application	
	Conventional / Fixed Route	Service operates on a fixed route and schedule, with regular stop spacing approximately every 400m in more urban areas or to key destinations and neighbourhoods in more rural areas.	Offers clarity and ease of use for passengers but is less flexible to accommodate other passenger needs, particularly people with disabilities who may not be able to access stops.
	Flex-Route	Service operates on a general route or schedule, but may deviate off route <i>at multiple points as needed</i> to provide service.	Provides the general clarity of service of fixed route service to key points but also enables the bus to provide door-to-door service for people with disabilities unable to reach stops (or extension to specific destinations on request) as part of its route.
	Demand Responsive with Trip Windows	Service operates fully door-to-door, but is clustered around specific “trip window” times to help passengers align travel together. For instance, service may be published as operating on specific weekdays to a particular area or available from 8:00am to 9:00am and 2:00pm to 3:00pm.	Particularly for trips that have a longer intervening travel time (such as longer distance travel between communities), this style of demand responsive service is generally a more efficient way to provide service with a demand responsive component since it clusters similar trips together. It also better enables passengers to plan their appointments around when transit service is available.
	Fully Demand Responsive	Service is dispatched as needed and serves door-to-door locations. Trips are booked ahead of time by clients.	Can be the most expensive type of transit to operate and is therefore best reserved for higher ridership and population centres where there is better opportunity to group similar trips together.

5.2 Recommended Transit Service Design Types

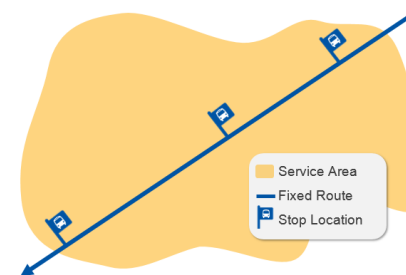
Selecting from the general service design types presented above in **Section 5.1**, this Study's recommendations and the Regional Handibus Service Options presented in **Section 6.0** use a combination of **Flex-Route** and **Demand Responsive Service with Trip Windows**. These service types provide not only a means to primarily serve the transportation needs of seniors and people with a disability in communities surrounding Grande Prairie, but also others in those communities that may have transportation need, such as lower income families, youth, etc.

These services are distinctive from the **Fixed Route** service that has been proposed for the Grande Prairie area submission to the Provincial Rural Transportation Pilot Project. In that case, services would be on a fixed route serving stops on a defined schedule. Some residents—such as more active seniors living close to proposed stops—may be able to use both services.

Therefore, while funding for the Grande Prairie Provincial Rural Transportation Pilot Project proposals has not yet been confirmed, the recommended service design has considered opportunities for Handibus and Fixed Route service to complement each other to meet diverse needs and also deliver the most overall value to area residents.

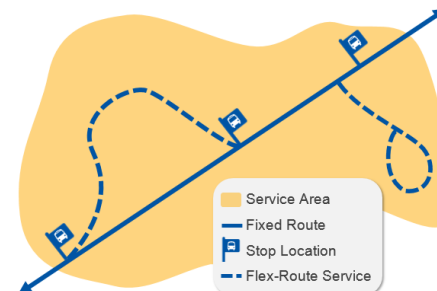
In Focus: Recommended Service Design Types

Conventional / Fixed Route

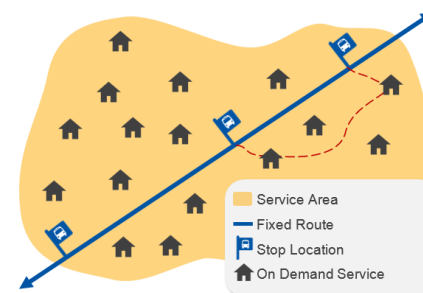


Design Type Used
by the Provincial
Rural Transportation
Pilot Project

Flex-Route



Demand Responsive with Trip Windows



Design Types
Recommended for
Grande Prairie
Regional Handibus

5.3 Strategies to Align with Other Services

Beyond the Regional Handibus service options proposed in **Section 6.0**, there are several other existing and potential transportation solutions in the region. The following provides perspective on each and outlines opportunities for integration that [a] have already been considered as part of service option development or [b] strategies that could be considered in future to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of transportation primarily serving seniors and people with a disability in the Grande Prairie region.

Grande Prairie Transit

Overview – Grande Prairie Transit provides conventional, fixed route transit within the City of Grande Prairie that can provide another option for Regional Handibus passengers to travel between destinations within the City. All buses are accessible for people using wheelchairs and offer features that make it easier for all passengers using mobility aids (e.g., walkers, canes, etc.) to board.



Opportunities and Recommendations

- Proposed Regional Handibus services have been designed to serve key destinations where connections are also possible to Grande Prairie Transit, including Prairie Mall, Walmart, downtown Grande Prairie, Queen Elizabeth II Hospital and Eastlink Centre.
- If Regional Handibus is implemented, its customer information materials should include reference to Grande

Prairie Transit connections, accessible vehicles and customer contact numbers, and vice versa.

- Where possible, policies and fares should be made consistent to facilitate travel between the services.

Disabled Transportation Society of Grande Prairie (DTS)

Overview – DTS provides all specialized transit within the City of Grande Prairie, as well as immediately adjacent areas of the County of Grande Prairie, including Clairmont.

Opportunities and Recommendations

- Given passenger demand from Clairmont and the location in the County of existing DTS customers and key destinations (such as Peace Area Riding for the Disabled Society who would be impractical to serve by Regional Handibus), it makes sense to retain a portion of County funding towards DTS services to meet these needs.
- Likewise, Regional Handibus options presented in **Section 6.0** include an option to fund expanded DTS service and a shared additional vehicle in order to support door-to-door travel within the City for disabled passengers that may be arriving from Regional Handibus.
- As with the conventional service recommendations, opportunities to align policies and fares and cross promote services in customer information materials should be considered between DTS and Regional Handibus services.

Provincial Rural Transportation Pilot Project

Overview – The County of Grande Prairie’s submission to the Provincial Rural Transportation Pilot Project focusses on identical communities for regional connection as are addressed in the Base Options presented for Regional Handibus in **Section 6.1** (Connection from Hythe, Beaverlodge, Wembley, Sexsmith and Clairmont to the City of Grande Prairie).

However, while the Regional Handibus options have greater focus on accessible, door-to-door service to key locations and eligible resident homes, the Provincial Pilot would be a fixed route, fixed stop service. Confirmation that the Grande Prairie Rural Transportation Pilot Project proposal was approved for provincial funding was received on June 28, 2018.

Opportunities and Recommendations

- Recommendations for next steps in this Study have taken Pilot Project confirmation timing into account as Handibus and Rural Transportation (if funded) should be considered in tandem.
- Likewise, the Regional Transportation Staff Working Group proposed in the **Section 10.0** implementation recommendations has been proposed to potentially encompass both initiatives.
- If the Rural Transportation Pilot Project and Regional Handibus are both approved for implementation, then schedules, key community stop locations, fares, customer information, marketing materials and policies should be aligned as much as possible between the two services.

Taxis, Volunteer Driver Networks, Ride Hailing¹

Overview – Another way that communities can efficiently expand the reach of their transit system is through coordination with third party transportation providers. These include taxi companies, seniors and medical transportation organizations (often driven or coordinated by volunteers), and ride hailing apps where they exist.

Opportunities and Recommendations

- It is recommended that existing organizations that provide as-needed transportation services that are not clearly duplicated by the proposed Regional Handibus service continue to be supported where possible.
- A number of systems commonly use taxi companies or other third party transportation providers to deliver some trips when the service is overcapacity. This practice is not currently used in the Grande Prairie area but could be considered to help support in-town door-to-door connections within the City of Grande Prairie.
- Lack of accessible vehicles, less client comfort with technology and demographics may limit the usefulness of future ride hailing to supplement Regional Handibus. If implemented, the municipal license for ride hailing operators to provide service within an area should be contingent upon the operating organization clearly describing how it will [a] complement and align with transit use, [b] equitably meet the transportation needs of people with a disability, and [c] provide travel pattern data to the sponsoring municipality.

¹ There is often confusion about the differences between ride share and ride hailing. In short, ride sharing and ride hailing are typically used interchangeably and refer to a service where a customer pays an operating company to be driven to a destination (similar to a taxi).

6.0 REGIONAL HANDIBUS SERVICE OPTIONS

Building from the identified issues and opportunities, existing travel patterns, and projected demand, several Handibus service options were developed for the Grande Prairie region. The service options are broken into two sections:

- **6.1 Regional Handibus: Base Options** presents the recommended minimum “starting point” for Regional Handibus in the Grande Prairie area to better utilize existing transportation resources and meet expected existing demand.
- **6.2 Regional Handibus: Augmented Options** presents additional services, which build from and could be layered onto that base to expand the number of trips per day, days per week or service area of the projected service.

Where feasible, options are also portrayed separately for the main two corridors of communities in the region:

- The **western corridor** encompasses service between Hythe, Beaverlodge, Wembley and Grande Prairie.
- The **northern corridor** encompasses service between Sexsmith, Clairmont and Grande Prairie.

While service in the region would ideally be developed in tandem across these corridors, the options have been portrayed separately between them. This separation of options is to acknowledge that each corridor has slightly different travel patterns and potential operating structures and to better enable decision makers to see how different option variations may be combined together to best meet community needs.

Other cost/revenue assumptions are as follows:

- High level costs and performance estimates are included for each option and are based on an average of 2018 actuals for existing area services that exist as well as peer Alberta systems.
- Base Option figures encompass the total of projected costs and performance while estimates presented for the Augmented Service Options are each incremental to this base.
- “Low” and “High” estimates are presented for operating costs and net operating costs (costs less revenue) to reflect different operating model impacts.
- Revenue estimates are based on the fare structure proposed in **Section 8.2**. Vehicles estimates assume the ability to share vehicles between services on the two corridors.
- Actual costs may vary depending on confirmed budget figures and finalization of operating details and models at the time of implementation. A table summarizing cost and performance estimates across all options is presented in **Section 6.3**.

In Focus: Conservative Approach to Estimates

The cost and performance estimates have been developed to be conservative: therefore, costs shown are at the higher end of the potential spectrum while ridership and therefore revenue estimates—which offset the projected share of municipal costs—are at the lower end.

6.1 Regional Handibus: Base Options

Service Option 1

Introductory Regional Handibus Service Along Two Corridors: One Round Trip per Day, Two Days per Week

Description: As shown in the map on the following page, the proposed base Handibus option for the region is to offer one round trip per day on two days per week along each of two corridors:

- The **western corridor** would offer service between Hythe, Beaverlodge, Wembley and Grande Prairie.
- The **northern corridor** would offer service between Sexsmith, Clairmont and Grande Prairie.

Routing and Locations Served: The Handibus service would operate as flex-route, serving each of the communities in the corridor at designated pick up/drop off points but with also the flexibility to provide door-to-door service for people with disabilities.

- Within the municipal boundaries of **Hythe, Beaverlodge, Wembley** and **Sexsmith**, those who have a disability that prevents them from accessing the designated pick up/drop off points would be eligible for door-to-door service.
- Within the **County of Grande Prairie**, door-to-door pick up as part of the Regional Handibus Service Base Option would be available in the built-up areas of **Clairmont**. (Existing on-demand service provided by the DTS to County locations within 5km of the City of Grande Prairie municipal boundary—such as the Peace Area Riding for the Disabled Society—would be retained, although it is recommended that this County

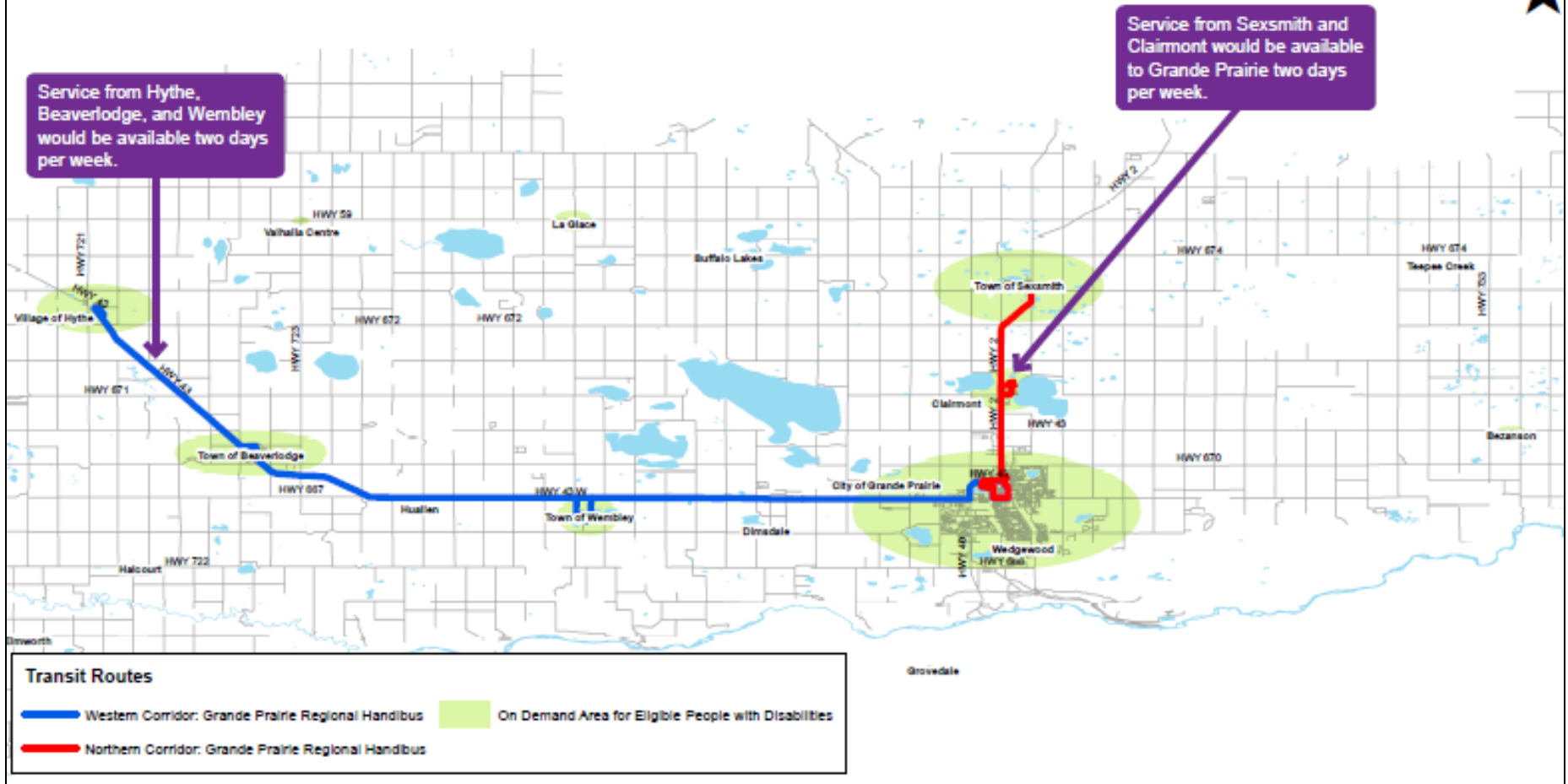
service area be reconsidered and reconfirmed as a number of existing users are not within it).

- Within the **City of Grande Prairie**, it would serve a variety of regular destinations, which are recommended to include Prairie Mall, Walmart and other shopping in the vicinity of the intersection of Hwy 43 and 108 Street, Queen Elizabeth II Hospital (and the new Grande Prairie Regional Hospital when completed in 2019), medical/dental destinations in downtown Grande Prairie and Eastlink Centre on request.
- The Regional Handibus would also serve other on-request locations within the City of Grande Prairie as booking time permits.

Eligibility: Service at designated points would be available to all residents—irrespective of age—but all users would need to register with the service and book travel ahead of time. People with a disability that prevents them from accessing the designated points would be eligible for door-to-door service.

- For further information on recommended eligibility definition and suggested registration processes, please see **Section 8.1**.

GRANDE PRAIRIE REGIONAL HANDIBUS FEASIBILITY STUDY – PROPOSED BASE SERVICE (OPTION 1)



In Focus: Prioritization by Trip Purpose

Many other specialized services in Canada have discontinued the practice of overtly prioritizing service availability based on trip purpose (i.e. medical trips vs. those for shopping or recreation). Rather than prioritization by trip purpose, it is recommended that the Regional Handibus Service allocate a specific number of door-to-door “service windows” available within the schedule and also retain the maximum number of spaces for passengers who may be using wheelchairs or scooters before then confirming space available for ambulatory passengers after a certain cut-off point.

Schedule and Service Operation: Service would be scheduled to enable same-day return service from the outlying communities to the City, with a two- to four- hour window of time within the City to accommodate errands.

- The Base Option projects service at two days per week for each corridor and to be effective these days would be offset from each other. For instance, to align with existing service provision, service on the Northern corridor might be on Tuesdays and Thursdays while service on the Western corridor might be on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Key Benefits: By offering an ability to integrate the now separate existing Handibus services together as a whole, the Base Service level presented in Option 1 offers the ability to increase service frequency for a relatively small additional annual operating cost increase. This level of service is expected to meet demand, at least over the short term.

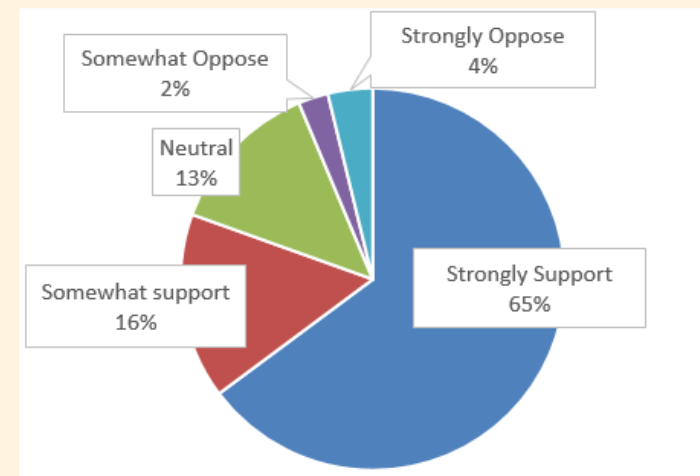
Considerations:

- Moving to a Regional Handibus operation would require an Alberta Operating Authority Certificate (or an amendment to an existing Operating Authority Certificate). Discussions with Alberta Transportation staff as part of this Study process have determined that the service portrayed in this document would be possible under existing regulations. Please see **Section 6.5** for further information on the recommended process required to obtain this Operating Authority.
- Consolidating the existing separate services into corridors involves time trade offs. For instance, existing users of the

Hythe Handibus would have a longer trip (since the bus would now also stop in Beaverlodge and Wembley on its way to and from Grande Prairie) but would have access to four times the frequency than currently (two days a week instead of once every two weeks). Open house participants throughout the corridor said they supported longer travel time if it meant more frequency.

- Determining the “right” amount of time in Grande Prairie involves striking a balance between enough time to enable most passengers to access medical appointments and

In Focus: Support for Proposed Base Service Level



Overall, 81% of respondents across all surveys and open houses strongly supported or somewhat supported the base service proposal. Those who opposed it mainly misunderstood that the Regional Service was not projected to impact the existing in-town Handibus service operated by the DTS. Those who “somewhat supported” service frequently requested either additional trips per day or more days per week.

shopping without making the day so long that it exhausts passengers. Open house participants expressed a desire to see an in-town interval of 2-2.5 hours between the first drop off and last pick up in Grande Prairie on the Western corridor whereas 3-3.5 hours was desired on the Northern corridor services.

- Existing service operators and municipal staff in the region have taken a significant role in shaping current Handibus services. Successfully retaining as many existing customers as possible through any Regional Handibus implementation stemming from this Study depends on ensuring that those staff fully understand and have a role in shaping it. The recommendations presented in **Section 10.0** includes an outline of a Municipal Staff Working Group and Service Provider Working Group that would provide the structure to involve these individuals in developing any resulting implementation.
- Some communities—notably Hythe and Clairmont—had a higher proportion of existing Handibus passengers who are more frail. These passengers often require more attention and are less able to withstand longer journey time frames. Municipal or organizational funding partners in Regional Handibus may also wish to allocate additional hours to facilitate travel for these individuals on certain days separate from the other Regional Handibus service, such as every second Monday.
- Vehicle Capital Costs:** The Base Service Option has been developed to be operated using two vehicles: one in

service and one spare. Over the short term, there may be an opportunity to use existing vehicles to operate service (for instance, the vehicles already used by Hythe, Wembley and the Grande Spirit Foundation). Depending on the operating model used, repurposing these vehicles for shared service may require investment in new radios, branding, etc. Estimated one-time capital purchase costs for a radio is \$2,000 and branding/vehicle livery is \$12,000.

Over the longer term, the goal would be to obtain two identical replacement vehicles. Based on weather and service design, recommended vehicles would be 20-passenger high floor minibuses with a rear or side lift and the space to carry up to four passengers using wheelchairs. Estimated one-time capital purchase costs for a new vehicle of this type is approximately \$225,000. However, there are typically more funding streams available for capital costs than operating.

Initial High Level Estimate – Additional Impacts			
Option 1a Base Option: Western Corridor, One Round Trip per Day, Two Days/Week			
1 Vehicles	Estimated Cost Range		
900 Annual Service Hours	Low	High	
3,100 Annual Passengers	\$65,400	\$80,000	Annual Operating Cost
\$12,400 Annual Revenue	\$53,000	\$67,600	Net Annual Operating Cost

Initial High Level Estimate – Additional Impacts			
Option 1b Base Option: Northern Corridor, One Round Trip per Day, Two Days/Week			
1 Vehicles	Estimated Cost Range		
900 Annual Service Hours	Low	High	
3,500 Annual Passengers	\$64,900	\$74,200	Annual Operating Cost
\$14,000 Annual Revenue	\$50,900	\$60,200	Net Annual Operating Cost

Service Option 2

Provision for Special Group Trips

Description: Complementing the introduction of base Regional Handibus service, this option would create an **annual budget of special event service hours** to facilitate additional services that may be advertised to the community and booked, such as Christmas lights tours or travel to community events or festivals.

In addition to the annual budget, **a defined charter trip user fee and required operating authority** should be implemented to enable citizens and groups to charter the Handibus vehicle.

Key Benefits: Retaining the flexibility to offer special group trips and charters was one of the key desires heard through the project's second phase of public engagement. In particular, those individuals who were already involved with the existing Handibus service providers said that they supported the Base Service Option proposed as long as there was a way to still organize and offer group trips at other times to specific locations. Group trips can have substantial benefits for social well-being and opportunity to interact with others.

Considerations:

- As part of the governance process, ideally an annual budget for the special events service hours should be defined each year as well as a process defined for considering and approving which community events will be supported by these service hours.
- A charter policy typically includes a cost for groups to book service expressed either as per hour or per km and may also specify the minimum number of hours, minimum number of passengers to be carried and/or fee per passenger.
- Expected typical special events to be served and the geographic range and frequency of charters should be confirmed and included as part of the Operating Authority Certificate letter describing proposed services that is recommended to be provided to Alberta Transportation. (See **Section 6.5.**)

Initial High Level Estimate – Additional Impacts

Option 2: Special Events Annual Budget

0 Vehicles	Estimated Cost Range	
	Low	High
150 Annual Service Hours		
200 Annual Passengers	\$10,300	\$11,900
\$800 Annual Revenue	\$9,500	\$11,100
		Net Annual Operating Cost

6.2 Regional Handibus: Augmented Options

Building onto the Base Option, there is an opportunity to add additional service in terms of more trips per day, days of service per week and service area. The following presents each of the possible augmented options, including showing separate costs by Northern or Western corridor where feasible. As described previously in **Section 6.0**, all costs and performance estimates for the Augmented Options are incremental to the Base Option: Service Option 1.

Service Option 3

Extension to La Glace and Bezanson One Day per Week

Description: This option would create provision to extend service to La Glace and Bezanson on one day per week, as shown in the map on the following page.

- For instance, on Tuesdays there could be provision for the bus to start in La Glace prior to picking up in Sexsmith, with a corresponding return trip extending to La Glace after Sexsmith at the end of the day.
- Likewise, this option creates provision for a separate extension to Bezanson before and after Northern corridor Base service on Thursdays.
- Service would only extend to either of these communities if there was a passenger to pick up or drop off in these locations and they had pre-booked at least 24 hours in advance, thereby enabling unused service to be retained in the budget.

Key Benefits: Provides an opportunity to include these smaller communities in the Regional Handibus network in a cost-effective manner at a service level that aligns with their population. Particularly in the case of La

Glace, it also provides an opportunity to access services and social opportunities in Sexsmith as well as Grande Prairie.

Considerations:

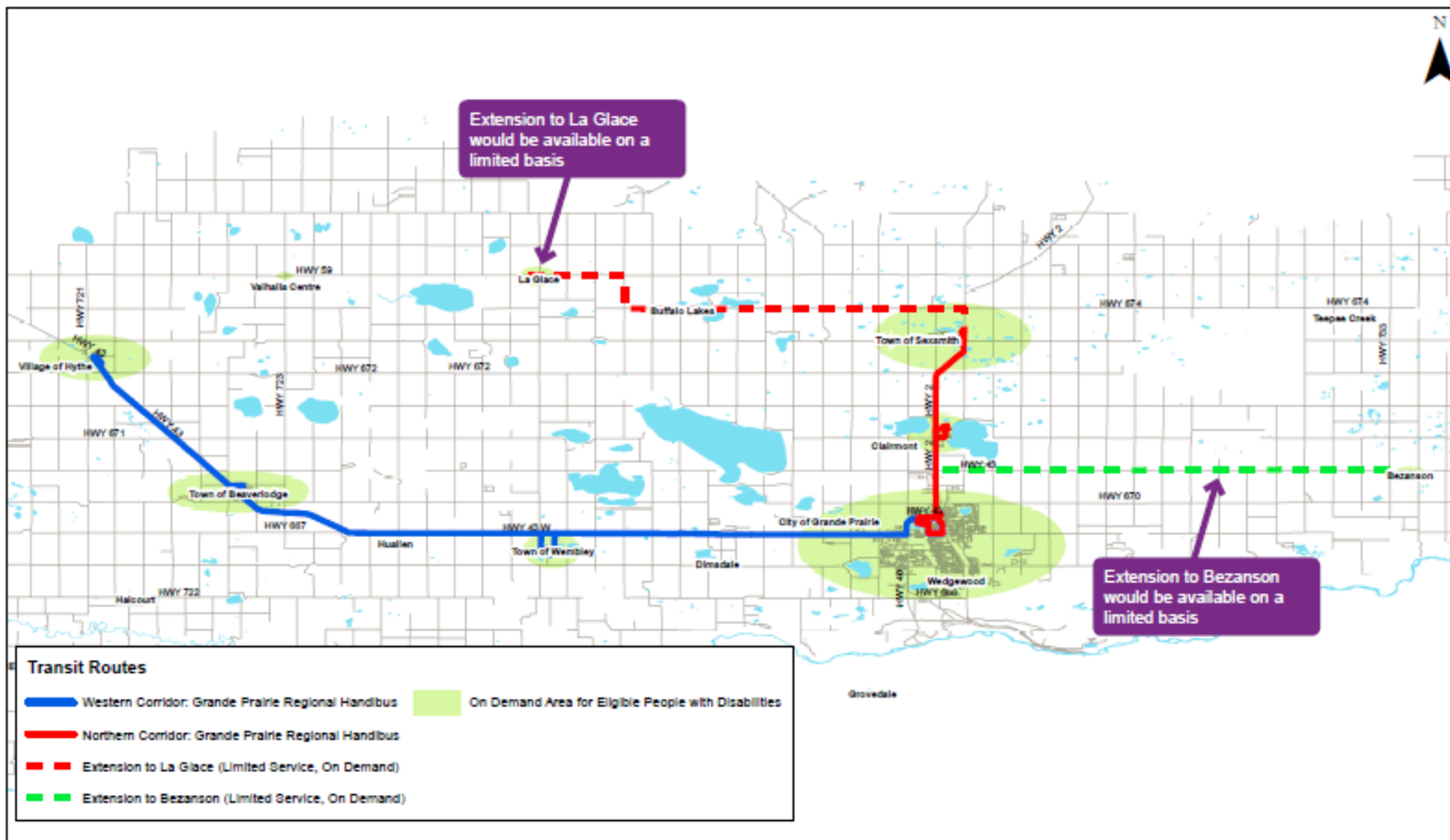
- It would also be possible to consider other less frequent options for these communities if desired, such as service to La Glace only once per week or service to either community every second week.
- Considerations around eligibility and door-to-door service are identical to those of the Base Option, meaning that individuals with a disability living in the built-up area of either community would be eligible for door-to-door pick up and drop off.

Initial High Level Estimate – Additional Impacts

Option 3: Extension to La Glace and Bezanson One Day per Week

	Estimated Cost Range	
	Low	High
0 Vehicles		
200 Annual Service Hours		
300 Annual Passengers	\$13,800	\$15,800
\$1,200 Annual Revenue	\$12,600	\$14,600
		Annual Operating Cost
		Net Annual Operating Cost

GRANDE PRAIRIE REGIONAL HANDIBUS FEASIBILITY STUDY – PROPOSED EXTENSIONS TO LA GLACE AND BEZANSON (OPTION 3)



Service Option 4

Western Corridor: Additional Round Trip per Day on the Base Two Days per Week

Description: This option creates provision to add one more round trip per day of service between Hythe, Beaverlodge, Wembley and Grande Prairie.

- For instance, in between the morning trip into Grande Prairie and the late afternoon return trip, it would insert a midday trip from Grande Prairie to Hythe and return.

Key Benefits: The key benefit of a second trip per day is that it potentially provides more options and flexibility for passengers allowing them to stay in Grande Prairie for a shorter period of time (i.e., one- to two-hours) or stay there for a longer six hour period, depending on which return trip they chose.

- In the case of the Western corridor, another key benefit is that it provides the ability for people to travel between those communities.

Considerations:

- A downside to this option is that the long distance from Hythe to Grande Prairie means that the first trip of the day would need to be earlier and the last trip later. Extending the service day too much would likely render the service less feasible for many Handibus passengers.
- Another consideration is that in service of this style, pre-bookings must be carefully monitored to ensure that the last return trip of the day is not over capacity.

Initial High Level Estimate – Additional Impacts

Option 4: Western Corridor: Additional Round Trip per Day on Base Two Days/Week

	Estimated Cost Range	
	Low	High
0 Vehicles		
500 Annual Service Hours		
1,500 Annual Passengers	\$34,500	\$39,600 Annual Operating Cost
\$6,000 Annual Revenue	\$28,500	\$33,600 Net Annual Operating Cost

Service Option 5

Northern Corridor: Additional Round Trip per Day on the Base Two Days per Week

Description: This option is identical to the description provided for Option 4 except that it applies to an additional round trip on the Northern corridor between Grande Prairie, Clairmont and Hythe.

Key Benefits: As with Option 4, an additional trip provides improved ability for a shorter or longer day in Grande Prairie and for travel between communities.

Considerations: As with Option 4, disadvantages to this option are the longer service day and that the last trip's capacity must be carefully monitored, although the shorter Northern corridor somewhat lessens these impacts.

Initial High Level Estimate – Additional Impacts

Option 5: Northern Corridor: Additional Round Trip per Day on Base Two Days/Week

	Estimated Cost Range	
	Low	High
0 Vehicles		
400 Annual Service Hours		
1,200 Annual Passengers	\$27,600	\$31,700 Annual Operating Cost
\$4,800 Annual Revenue	\$22,800	\$26,900 Net Annual Operating Cost

Service Option 6

Western Corridor: Additional Day of Service Per Week (One Round Trip per Day)

Description: This option creates provision to add one more day of service per week between Hythe, Beaverlodge, Wembley and Grande Prairie. For instance, adding service on Mondays (excluding Statutory Holidays) to that of Wednesdays and Fridays.

Key Benefits: An additional day of service offers further passenger capacity and flexibility to travel without impacting the overall length of the service day.

Considerations:

- Generally, consistency in transit schedules drives higher ridership. Therefore, the service presented here for the additional service day is identical to the round trip of the Base Option. However, it may also be possible to consider

a longer or shorter time within Grande Prairie on this third day.

- If the Western and Northern corridors both want a third day that overlaps (i.e. both want Monday as their third day), then a third vehicle would be required. (Two in service, one spare).

Initial High Level Estimate – Additional Impacts

Option 6: Western Corridor: Additional Day of Service Per Week (One Round Trip/Day)

	Estimated Cost Range	
	Low	High
0 Vehicles		
500 Annual Service Hours		
1,600 Annual Passengers	\$35,200	\$48,300 Annual Operating Cost
\$6,400 Annual Revenue	\$28,800	\$41,900 Net Annual Operating Cost

Service Option 7

Northern Corridor: Additional Day of Service Per Week (Two Round Trips per Day)

Description: This option is identical to the description provided for Option 6 except that it provides an additional day of service on the Northern corridor between Grande Prairie, Clairmont and Hythe.

Key Benefits: As with Option 6, an additional day of service offers further passenger capacity and flexibility to travel without impacting the overall length of the service day.

Considerations: As with Option 6, the same key considerations apply related to consistency of schedules

across service days and the potential requirement of an additional vehicle if Northern and Western corridor service days are not offset.

Initial High Level Estimate – Additional Impacts

Option 7: Northern Corridor: Additional Day of Service Per Week (One Round Trip/Day)

	Estimated Cost Range	
	Low	High
0 Vehicles		
400 Annual Service Hours		
1,300 Annual Passengers	\$27,600	\$31,700 Annual Operating Cost
\$5,200 Annual Revenue	\$22,400	\$26,500 Net Annual Operating Cost

Service Option 8

Further Shared Investment in DTS Service to Supplement Regional Handibus In-Town, Rural Service

Description: This option creates provision to add six hours of service per weekday to assist with in-town travel and transfers of Regional Handibus passengers when they arrive in the City, as well as to create further capacity to serve rural County destinations and passengers immediately adjacent to the City.

- As the majority of the additional daily hours would be focused on middays (roughly 10:00am to 2:30pm), this option creates the potential for the DTS to consider a separate but related expansion to its own services at peak times when it experiences strong demand for work, medical test and day program travel (i.e. roughly 7:00am to 10:00am and 2:30pm to 5:00pm).
- An additional vehicle would be required for this option. The total approximate cost of a new, accessible 20-passenger minibus is \$225,000. However, ideally this cost would be shared with the DTS and its funders.

Key Benefits: As Regional Handibus service matures and ridership grows, there may not be enough capacity to coordinate in-town door-to-door travel, particularly for

medical appointments on weekdays. This option provides a solution to address that demand in a way that potentially shares capital costs for a vehicle and also provides more capacity to serve people with a disability living in County areas directly adjacent to the City.

Considerations:

- As discussed, ideally this option is implemented in coordination with expansion to other DTS services within the City.
- Likewise, this option would require coordination between DTS and Regional Handibus services if they are not operated in an integrated manner, including process for coordinating passenger registration information and dispatch and alignment of fares and policies.

Initial High Level Estimate – Additional Impacts

Option 8: Further Shared Investment in DTS Service to Supplement Regional In-Town, Rural Service

	Estimated Cost Range	
	Low	High
1 Vehicle (\$225,000)		
1,600 Annual Service Hours		
3,800 Annual Passengers	\$113,100	\$129,700
\$10,600 Annual Revenue	\$102,500	\$119,100
		Annual Operating Cost
		Net Annual Operating Cost

6.3 Service Option Summary

The following presents high level financial and performance estimates for each of the service options. For comparison, the existing annual municipal subsidy by the County of Grande Prairie and Towns of Beaverlodge and Wembley and Village of Hythe in 2018 for areas covered by the Base Options presented is approximately \$97,000. Other financial assumptions are as follows:

- Costs are based on an average of 2018 actuals from the region and peer communities. A cost range is presented since the final selected service delivery model may affect travel time to the start of service and wage rate.
- Revenue assumes a proposed **\$5 one-way cash fare**, with ticket books at a 20% discount. (See **Section 8.2**).
- Vehicles shown assume ability to share fleet between the North and West corridors. Depending on the service delivery model chosen, there may be an ability to use existing area vehicle assets in the near term. Capital purchase costs for a new 20 passenger accessible bus is approximately \$225,000.

GRANDE PRAIRIE REGIONAL HANDIBUS FEASIBILITY STUDY
SERVICE OPTION SUMMARY: HIGH LEVEL ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL ANNUAL IMPACTS*

Service Option	Vehicles **	Annual Service Hours	Annual Rides	Annual Operating Costs		Annual Total Revenue	Annual Net Operating Costs	
				Low	High		Low	High
Base Options for Consideration								
Option 1a Base Option: Western Corridor, One Round Trip per Day, Two Days/Week	1	900	3,100	\$65,400	\$80,000	\$12,400	\$53,000	\$67,600
Option 1b Base Option: Northern Corridor, One Round Trip per Day, Two Days/Week	1	900	3,500	\$64,900	\$74,200	\$14,000	\$50,900	\$60,200
Option 2: Special Events Annual Budget	0	150	200	\$10,300	\$11,900	\$800	\$9,500	\$11,100
Base Option Total	2	1,950	6,800	\$140,600	\$166,100	\$27,200	\$113,400	\$138,900
Additional Expansion Options: Note That Amounts Shown ADD ON TO Those Shown for the Base Option								
Option 3: Extension to La Glace and Bezanson One Day per Week	0	200	300	\$13,800	\$15,800	\$1,200	\$12,600	\$14,600
Option 4: Western Corridor: Additional Round Trip per Day on Base Two Days/Week	0	500	1,500	\$34,500	\$39,600	\$6,000	\$28,500	\$33,600
Option 5: Northern Corridor: Additional Round Trip per Day on Base Two Days/Week	0	400	1,200	\$27,600	\$31,700	\$4,800	\$22,800	\$26,900
Option 6: Western Corridor: Additional Day of Service Per Week (One Round Trip/Day)	0	500	1,600	\$35,200	\$48,300	\$6,400	\$28,800	\$41,900
Option 7: Northern Corridor: Additional Day of Service Per Week (One Round Trip/Day)	0	400	1,300	\$27,600	\$31,700	\$5,200	\$22,400	\$26,500
Option 8: Further Shared Investment in DTS Service to Supplement Regional In-Town, Rural Service	1	1,600	3,800	\$113,100	\$129,700	\$10,600	\$102,500	\$119,100

Notes:

* Based on 2018 budgets and peer averages. Final costs may vary based on detailed budgets, year of implementation and final operational details.

** Except for Option 8—which requires a further vehicle—vehicle requirements shown are based on a model which shares one in-service vehicle and one spare vehicle between the Western and Northern Corridors. The feasibility of this may be impacted by the final service delivery model chosen. Likewise, this model assumes that service to the Western and Northern corridors would be operated on different days: operating them on the same day (such as if both corridors had 3 days/week service) would require an additional vehicle to what is shown here.

6.4 Service Option Recommendation

The Base Options described offer improved coordination of services, are projected to meet demand and substantially improve service frequency and flexibility of travel for seniors and people with a disability in the Grande Prairie region, as well as others who have transportation need.

The proposed design and service frequency was also overwhelmingly supported during engagement.

If investment above the Base Options is desired, it is likely most advantageous to prioritize an additional day of Regional Handibus service and coordinate this with the

potential implementation of Provincial Rural Transportation Project services as a way of offering more trips per day.

Coordination in that manner would retain core Regional Handibus service trip lengths and times that are likely most feasible for those seniors and people with a disability that may require a higher degree of care while coordinating additional options via Rural Transportation for those who may be more mobile or independent.

In Focus: Potential Funding Sources and Cost Apportionment

The most common funding sources for transit of all types in Canada are municipal property taxes, passenger fares and advertising. However, there are a number of other funding streams that may be applicable to Grande Prairie Regional Handibus. A high-level overview based on research undertaken for this Study is provided in **Appendix A**.

Likewise, collaborative funding of transit service by municipalities usually includes agreement on how costs will be shared. **Appendix B** provides an outline of typical cost-apportionment methods for transit services and how they might apply to Regional Handibus.

6.5 Obtaining Operating Authority Certification

Transportation services in Alberta are regulated through Alberta Transportation. A Regional Handibus service as described in Base Service Option 1 would require a Commercial Operating Authority Certificate. Several different types of Operating Authority Certificates exist (e.g., charter bus, private bus, industrial, inter-provincial, etc.) and more information on these types, the overall program and application forms can be found at <http://www.transportation.alberta.ca/663.htm>.

Alberta Transportation staff contacted as part of this project indicated they did not see any issues with a Regional Handibus service operating as described in Option 1 (i.e. picking up and dropping off passengers in various communities along the way to Grande Prairie), insofar as there is the correct operating authority certificate in place.

The steps in obtaining a new or amended Operating Authority Certificate would be:

- Provide Alberta Transportation with a letter clearly defining and outlining the proposed service, the types of passengers (e.g., seniors, children, young adults, persons with disabilities etc.), the types of trips it would be providing, and the seating capacity of the bus(es) and whether the proposed operator(s) already have an Operating Authority Certificate and its type. At the time of the writing of this report, the correct addressee for this letter is Attn: Sharon Runge, Carrier Services, Alberta Transportation, Room 401, 4920 51st Street, Red Deer AB, T4N 6K8.
- Alberta Transportation would then determine and advise which Operating Authority Certificate application form needs to be completed along with providing other important direction needed about how to operate the service legally.
- If the proposed service includes buses with 11 or more seats, a 'Safety Fitness Certificate' would also need to be obtained to comply with the National Safety Code Program, further described here: <http://www.transportation.alberta.ca/638.htm>.

6.6 Performance Comparison and Benchmarking

The table below presents the population, ridership and service hour metrics for the proposed Grande Prairie Regional Handibus Base Options (Options 1a+1b+2) and the corresponding 2016 Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) operating statistics for other Alberta specialized transit systems serving populations of less than 100,000. (2016 is the latest CUTA information available).

The following page provides further information on the table.

BENCHMARK COMPARISON TO PEER ALBERTA TRANSIT SYSTEMS*

Community	Municipal Population	Total Vehicles	Annual Service Hours	Annual Ridership (Boardings)	Service Hours Per Capita	Ridership Per Capita
Grande Prairie Regional Handibus Base Options Estimate (Option 1a+1b+2)	9,350	2	1,950	6,800	0.21	0.73
<i>Note that in the figures above, population shown focusses on the populations primarily served by these options and therefore excludes the City of Grande Prairie and other areas of the County except for Clairmont.</i>						
Grande Prairie Specialized Transit (DTS)	65,088	9	24,300	118,336	0.37	1.82
Other CUTA Alberta Systems Serving Populations <100,000:						
Airdrie Specialized Transit	61,581	2	2,262	7,398	0.04	0.12
Fort Saskatchewan (Primarily Fixed Route)	24,569	2	6,657	66,725	0.27	2.72
Leduc (Specialized/Flex-Route Transit)	30,498	5	9,905	30,207	0.32	0.99
Lethbridge Specialized Transit	96,828	27	40,773	124,042	0.42	1.28
Red Deer Specialized Transit	99,718	24	25,841	99,692	0.26	1.00
Rocky View District Handibus	87,892	19	17,471	23,024	0.20	0.26
Spruce Grove Specialized Transit	34,070	4	4,319	5,775	0.13	0.17
Stony Plain Handibus	17,190	1	1,764	2,808	0.10	0.16
St Albert Specialized Transit	64,645	5	8,752	16,520	0.14	0.26
Strathcona County Specialized Transit	98,044	10	10,986	23,453	0.11	0.24
Wood Buffalo Specialized Transit	81,948	11	n/a	19,103	n/a	n/a
Select Peer Average (Airdrie, Fort Saskatchewan, Leduc, Spruce Grove, Stony Plain, St. Albert):					0.17	0.74

Applicable Peer Communities

Typically, the City of Grande Prairie uses the following Alberta communities for its peer comparisons based on population: Lethbridge, Medicine Hat², Red Deer, St. Albert and Strathcona County. The specialized services of these communities are included in the table on the preceding page, along with the performance of the DTS specialized transit primarily serving the City of Grande Prairie.

However, since a number of those typical peer services are focused on larger urban areas, they are less relevant to the Regional Handibus Base Options since that service covers longer distances and primarily connects smaller communities to a larger centre. Therefore:

- The population shown in the table for the Base Options reflects those areas that would primarily be the source for passengers: the Towns of Beaverlodge, Sexsmith and Wembley, Village of Hythe and the Clairmont area of the County of Grande Prairie.
- Some of the more relevant peers for the Regional Handibus Base Options, based on scale of operation or proportion of service that is regional in nature are:
 - **Leduc, Spruce Grove, Stony Plain and St. Albert**, since all of those specialized services an element of regional service to and from Edmonton. While **Fort Saskatchewan** primarily operates fixed route service to Edmonton, its scale of service makes it also a somewhat relevant peer.
 - **Airdrie**, as it includes regional service to Calgary.

² Medicine Hat is not shown in the table as that system does not report statistics to CUTA.

Measures Included and Analysis

Beyond population, number of vehicles, service hours provided (see definition provided in **Section 9.0**) and passengers, the table includes two metrics:

- **Service Hours per Capita** shows the general level of investment in service for a community.
- **Ridership per Capita** shows the relative level of transit uptake across a community.

Costs are not shown as this data tends to be less comparable in the CUTA information since many communities do not fully report costs, particularly in cases where the sponsoring municipality is providing administrative support, maintenance, fueling and fleet storage for systems.

In general, these table metrics show:

- The proposed level of transit investment proposed for the Regional Handibus Base Service Options generally aligns with the average of the peers noted above (0.21 hours per capita for the proposed Regional Handibus, slightly above the 0.17 peer average which is impacted by Airdrie's low of 0.04).
- The ridership projections align quite strongly, with 0.73 rides per capita projected for the Regional Handibus Base Option versus 0.74 for the select peer average.

7.0 SERVICE DELIVERY AND GOVERNANCE

Several different service delivery models and governance structures are available to support Regional Handibus in the Grande Prairie region. The most effective models may also change over time as services and supporting partnerships evolve. The following outlines service delivery and governance structures explored by the Handibus Feasibility Study and high-level recommendations.

7.1 Service Delivery Models

Background: Service delivery refers to who and how service is operated. Typically guided by the goals and standards of the approving governance authority, the exact scope of service delivery can vary. In specialized transit and Handibus settings it typically includes:



- **Roles directly related to the “people” side of operations**, such as hiring and training drivers, operating transit services and handling customer information and complaints.
- **Vehicle-related operational activities**, such as bus fueling, cleaning and maintenance.

In some cases, the above two functions will be provided by the same entity; in other cases, they may be separated between organizations. **Administrative components** (monitoring and reporting on service, fare/revenue handling) may also be a part of service delivery, as well as **service planning functions** (overall system planning and budgeting, coordination with local road authority, vehicle procurement).

Service delivery is sometimes led by the governing authority, as is the case with Grande Prairie Transit, Beaverlodge Handibus and the Disabled Transportation Society of Grande

Prairie. In these cases, the respective municipality or non-profit (or for-profit) organization acts as both the governing authority and also the service delivery organization.

In many other cases, aspects of service delivery may be operated through contract between the governance authority and the operating organization(s), such as cases where a municipal council contracts with a non-profit organization or for-profit transit management company to delivery transit service.

For simplicity’s sake, this section refers to “contracts” as the structure for assigning service delivery functions to organizations, with the understanding that a contract would not necessarily be required in cases where the governing authority and service delivery organization were the same.

The multi-partner environment of the proposed Regional Handibus Service adds complexity to the service planning function. **Therefore, service planning functions have been addressed in the following Section 7.2 Governance Structures as something that would likely be performed by supporting municipal staff. The service delivery models described here focus on the people-, vehicle- and administrative-related functions.**

Service Delivery Models Explored: The Study determined the following applicable service delivery models for the Grande Prairie region and the type of service described in **Section 6.0**. The tables presented on the following pages provides a more detailed description and analysis of each.

- **Service Delivery Model Option 1 – Leveraged Status Quo:** Retain existing regional operating entities and assets and make use of them in a more coordinated manner.
- **Service Delivery Model Option 2 - Fully Regionally Operated:** Consolidate operation of regional services into one to two contracts with organizations situated in the larger region.
- **Service Delivery Model Option 3 – Centrally Operated:** Consolidate operation of regional services into one central contract with the DTS and/or City.
- **Service Delivery Model Option 4 – Hybrid A - Two Contracts:** Consolidate operation of regional services into two contracts: a regional entity (or consortium) for the Western corridor, and a centralized contract with DTS/City for the Northern corridor.
- **Service Delivery Model Option 5 – Hybrid B – Centralized Support:** Builds on Option 2 or 4 and formally creates a structure for the City to support aspects of system oversight and all fleet services (maintenance, fueling, procurement).

Service Delivery Recommendation: Generally, operational efficiency and service consistency increases as operating contracts are consolidated. However, several factors make a centralized model less immediately applicable in the case of the Grande Prairie region:

- Internal reorganization currently underway within the DTS and restricted capacity may make expansion less feasible in the near term.
- The distance from the City of Grande Prairie Service Centre vehicle garage to the potential Western corridor trip starting point in Hythe is fairly substantial and adds cost.

Given these factors and existing Handibus staff and vehicle resources already available in partner communities, an iterative approach may be slightly more complex but ultimately more workable:

- In the near term, look to transition to **Service Delivery Option 1 – Leveraged Status Quo**, potentially then followed by **Option 4 – Hybrid A** which blends a centralized contract for the Northern corridor and a regional operator for the Western corridor.
- As service matures and the service delivery options coalesce—ideally in concert with vehicle replacement schedules—look to transition to either **Option 5 Hybrid B: Centralized Support** or potentially **Option 3: Centrally Operated**.

In Focus: Typical Service Delivery Model Objectives and Attributes Considered

- **Long Term Outlook:** Ability to continue to support service as it grows in further scale and scope.
- **Level of Municipal Control:** Ability of various funding municipalities to influence service delivery decisions and quality.
- **Customer Care:** Ability to easily communicate service, consolidate dispatch, and address passenger needs.
- **Economy of Scale / Cost Implications:** Ability to make more efficient integrated use of staff, space and assets.
- **Funding Implications:** Ability to retain or gain charitable, institutional and municipal funding streams.

DETAILED DISCUSSION OF SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS

Service Delivery Model Option 1 – Leveraged

Status Quo: Retain existing regional operating entities and assets and make use of them in a more coordinated manner.

- This option would make use of some or all of the larger existing Handibus operators in the region but would more effectively deploy them to deliver service closer to what is presented in the Regional Handibus Base Service Options (with corresponding changes to service hours and contracts as required).
- **For Example:** Potentially adding or reallocating service to enable the Grande Spirit Foundation bus (or other) to operate the Northern corridor Regional Handibus service two days per week; creating a funding partnership to enable the Hythe and Wembley buses (which are newer than Beaverlodge's) to each operate one of the weekly service days on the Western corridor.
- **Benefits and Challenges:**
 - Makes use of existing organizations, staff and vehicles as much as possible and so may be a good starting point to contain costs.
 - Retains existing drivers as much as possible, which helps retain current passengers through a service transition. However, the success of this depends on showing how existing shift hours and services are reallocated.
 - With so many partners it may be unwieldy to achieve consistency of approach or maintain this structure over the long term.

Service Delivery Model Option 2 - Fully

Regionally Operated: Consolidate operation of regional services into one to two contracts with organizations situated in the larger region.

- This option is similar to Option 1 but would likely reduce the number of Handibus operators in the area, with vehicles potentially stored and operated from the outer ends of the Regional Handibus corridors.
- **For Example:** The governance authority could elect to streamline and better integrate service by reducing the number of contracted operating entities, either through assigning service or by undertaking a Request for Expressions of Interest or Request for Proposals process to select a service delivery organization or organizations. A more formal procurement process may elicit interest from other organizations not yet operating Handibus in the region.
- **Benefits and Challenges:**
 - Simplifies operation of service and makes it easier to apply consistent approaches.
 - Depending on the procurement approach selected, an abrupt change to service delivery organizations in the region may be perceived negatively by communities and existing passengers.
 - Costs for existing service providers operating regional services tend to be lower than those operating service focused within the City.

Service Delivery Model Option 3 – Centrally

Operated: Consolidate operation of regional services into one central contract, such as with the DTS and/or City.

- This option would transition Regional Handibus services to a single central operating entity to maximize “economies of scale” by integrating all of the specialized transit operating in the region (and/or potentially offering further integration with City fixed route transit or Provincial Rural Transportation Pilot Project services).
- **For Example:** Regional Handibus service would be assigned to the Disabled Transportation Society of Grande Prairie (DTS) or the City of Grande Prairie to operate as the two largest existing central transit providers in the region.
- **Benefits and Challenges:**
 - Creates the largest overall consolidation of service, which typically results in efficiencies and opportunities to improve coordination.
 - These two organizations generally have the most transportation experience in the region and access to best practices and resources. However, internal reorganization currently underway at the DTS and restricted capacity may make it less feasible to take on an expanded role over the near term.
 - Costs related to staffing and travel time from the garage location would likely be higher in this centralized option versus options that are regionally operated, particularly on the Western corridor.
 - Some passengers and citizens may negatively view this change as a loss of regional control.

DETAILED DISCUSSION OF SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS, CONTINUED

Service Delivery Model Option 4 – Hybrid A - Two

Contracts: Consolidate operation of regional services into two contracts: a regional entity (or consortium) for the Western corridor, and a centralized contract with DTS/City for the Northern corridor.

- This hybrid option seeks to balance the benefits and challenges of Options 2 and 3 by blending them.
- **For Example:** As all existing Handibus services operating on the Northern corridor are already based in Grande Prairie (Grande Spirit Foundation or DTS, which both store vehicles at the City of Grande Prairie Service Centre) and those communities are much closer to the City, this option would use a centralized operator for that corridor. The longer Western corridor would be operated regionally to reduce costs and maintain some continuity with existing services.
- **Benefits and Challenges:**
 - Similar to Option 1, creates an approach that may make it easier to transition from existing regional Handibus services and operators, at least over the short term.
 - Offers the ability to consolidate some services over the shorter term, which may then lead to further consolidations or centralization over time.
 - Would still require processes and structures in place to ensure consistency of approach across the multiple contracts.
 - Note that the interview with Grande Spirit Foundation staff indicated an openness to considering opportunities to support functions such as dispatch.

Service Delivery Model Option 5 – Hybrid B –

Centralized Support: Builds on Option 2 or 4 and formally creates a structure for the City to support aspects of system oversight and all fleet services (maintenance, fueling, procurement).

- Vehicle-related service delivery tasks are often the most challenging for smaller operating organizations to undertake and a key area where the City of Grande Prairie could potentially offer strong efficiencies to the region in terms of vehicle maintenance, fueling and procurement. This option would essentially create the opportunity to contract the vehicle-related components of service delivery to the City while retaining other aspects of service delivery with other organizations.
- **For Example:** A regional operator could deliver service on the Western corridor (taking advantage of lower travel costs) but the Regional Handibus could be switched out for a spare at the Grande Prairie Service Centre when it reaches the City, enabling it to be centrally maintained, deep-cleaned and fueled in a cost-effective manner.
- **Benefits and Challenges:**
 - Vehicle-related services are a key area where the City could offer improved service and cost savings to Regional Handibus partners.
 - This option offers a way to lay the foundation for consideration of other consolidation.

7.2 Governance Structures

Background: Decisions on governance define the highest-level decision-making and coordination for the system including setting direction, creating high-level goals, and providing oversight.



Governance primarily addresses **public policy functions** typically led by elected officials, and these include strategic planning (including the allocation of resources), securing funding, setting policy (including fare policy and eligibility), approving service plans and regional capital programs, and establishing the desired integration with other regional policies including land use and broader transportation policy.

As discussed previously in **Section 7.1** on service delivery models, the service planning functions that may often be performed by service delivery staff (overall system planning and budgeting, coordination with local road authority, vehicle procurement) are also included here since in the multi-partner environment of the proposed Regional Handibus Service this function would likely be performed by municipal staff reporting directly to the elected official-level governance authority.

The principal goals of the governance structures described here are to ensure accountability of decisions and the resulting efficiency, effectiveness and equity of service to citizens, clients/members and funders.

Governance Structures Explored: The elected-official governance authority structures described and examined include:

- **Governance Structure 1: Incorporated Separate Entity**
- A separate legal entity is established with accountability to provide regional transit, such as a commission.
- **Governance Structure 2: Committee-Based** - In this model, municipalities form an agreement to regionally collaborate on transit; decisions are discussed through a regional committee, all Council forum or other entity, with resulting recommendations referred to municipalities for formal approval.

The tables presented on the following pages provides a more detailed description and analysis of each. Two different types of municipal staff support are also discussed: designated municipal staff and/or a staff-level coordinating group.

Governance Recommendation: Even if transitioning to a separate legal entity in the long term, many regional governance structures have found the Committee-Based approach successful as a starting point. In either case, governance must also clearly define staffing and resources to support the governance structure.

In Focus: Typical Governance Structure Objectives and Attributes Considered

- **Accountability to Community Strategic Direction:** Ability to align decisions with municipal strategic objectives, financial outlook and community plans.
- **Accountability to Citizens / Taxpayers / Users / Other Funders:** Ability for these groups to influence decisions.
- **Organizational Sustainability:** Ease of implementation and low on-going administrative support and resources required.
- **Focus on Transit:** Degree that structure enables detailed consideration of transit-specific issues.

DETAILED DISCUSSION OF GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

- **Governance Structure 1: Incorporated Separate Entity:** A separate legal entity is established with accountability to provide regional transit. The Alberta model typically used for transit is a Regional Services Commission formally established through a provincially legislated Order in Council.

- **For Example:** While primarily focused on fixed-route transit, the **Bow Valley Regional Transit Services Commission** is a Regional Services Commission that exists to govern connecting transit primarily operating between communities. It was established in 2011 through an Order in Council (Alberta Regulation 59/2011) and its member municipalities are Improvement District No. 9, the Town of Banff and the Town of Canmore.

While a different type of legal entity (a Regional Public Housing Management Body established via the Alberta Housing Act) the **Grande Spirit Foundation** is a local example of an Incorporated Separate Entity. It encompasses 12 local municipalities with a Board of Directors made up of councilors from each.

- **Benefits and Challenges:**
 - A separate legal entity can own assets, enter into contracts and obtain financing, and this structure limits municipal liability.
 - Decision making can be independent of member Councils, meaning it can be easier to develop and approve service, fare and strategic policies at the regional level.
 - Establishing a commission can be a longer and intensive process and the ease of implementing it can sometimes be impacted by perceived loss of individual Council control of decisions.
 - Requires a separate service agreement with each member municipality.

Governance Structure 2: Committee Based: In this model, municipalities form an agreement to regionally collaborate on transit; decisions are discussed through an elected official-level regional committee, all Council forum or other entity, with resulting recommendations referred to municipalities for formal approval.

- **For Example:** A similar type of committee as that described here was formed to oversee the **Grande Prairie Area Joint Recreation Master Plan** (in that case, including elected official representatives from the City and County of Grande Prairie). The recommendation of the Master Plan was that going forward this committee “(or an expanded group) continue to provide guidance to recreation service delivery through the implementation of this Master Plan. Furthermore, an administrative body should be formed to support the ongoing work of the Committee.”

- **Benefits and Challenges:**
 - This structure is relatively easier to establish as it only requires the approval of the member Councils, not the province.
 - Individual Councils retain more control of service, fare and strategic policy decisions.
 - May not be effective in resolving disputes and/or ensuring cohesive service, fare and strategic policies at the regional level.
 - No ability to finance capital as a separate entity and one party must enter into contracts with staff and service delivery providers.;

In Focus: Types of Staff Support

Regardless of type of elected official-level governance authority structure selected, staff resources must be allocated to support it. In the Grande Prairie Region there are already examples of two types of staff support structures in entities that encompass this project's municipal partners:

- In the case of Grande Prairie Regional Emergency Partnership, there is a **dedicated staff person hosted by one of the municipal partners**.
- The Grande Prairie Area Joint Recreation Master Plan was an example of a process governed by an elected official committee supported by a **multi-municipality staff-level working group**. However, this format typically still needs to designate one staff person to chair or lead the group.

8.0 SUPPORTING MEASURES

The following presents complementing policy, fares, customer information, fleet and infrastructure priority measures that support the service options presented.

8.1 Policy Priorities



In addition to any policy directions that would stem from **Section 7.0** and partner discussion of service delivery and governance models, the following policy priorities are recommended:

- **Define Consistent Eligibility Criteria Across the Region for Door-to-Door Specialized Transit Services –**

Eligibility criteria for specialized service—including door-to-door service that may be offered on Regional Handibus—should be formally confirmed and applied across all impacted services in the region. Eligibility should also be based on ability, not age.

One version of an eligibility requirement used by a number of other systems is “People who have a physical or cognitive disability sufficiently severe that they cannot use fixed route transit—or access designated pick up / drop off points for rural transit / Regional Handibus services--some or all of the time.”



- **Implement a Consistent Registration Process Across All Larger Existing Handibus Service Providers –**

Maintaining a registration database helps manage system risk by identifying key client information that enables the system to serve passengers better, such as anticipating their health needs or equipment like mobility aids or oxygen tanks they may be bringing on board. It also enables dispatch or the driver to contact the right people if something happens while the Handibus is on the road. (Passenger does not show up at the pick up point or falls ill; bus breaks down or is involved in a motor vehicle incident).

The DTS already has an established registration process in place and it would be useful to implement this at other area service providers. As a starting point, it may be helpful to provide these other larger existing Handibus service providers with a short outline of a sample client registration process, a sample form and simple Excel table for tracking information, and a sample checklist describing procedures to maintain privacy and security for this information.

- **Consider Future Implementation of an In-Person Registration Process for Specialized Transit** – To help manage future demand and service effectiveness, coordinated improvements to specialized transit and Regional Handibus should also outline a future intake process that focusses on in-person assessment by a third party assessor (usually an occupational therapist or physiotherapist) rather than paper-based forms. This revised process ensures that specialized transit and door-to-door service on Regional Handibus is available and reserved for those who need it most. It can also include a travel training component for the accessible fixed-route system or potential Rural Transportation service for those passengers who may be able to also use them.
- **Align Policies and Procedures Between Services** – Wherever possible, policies and procedures should be applied and communicated consistently within organizations and aligned across applicable related services. The Regional Transportation Staff Working Group and Service Provider Working Group recommended for implementation in Section 10.0 would create the foundation for enabling this alignment.

- **Formalize Special Events Service and Budget Provision Across the Region** – As described in Service Option 2 in **Section 6.1**, this priority would create a process for confirming which special events to support with Regional Handibus special group trips, as well as defining a rate and guidelines for charters.
- **Data Collection, Monitoring and Communications Processes** – Cost and ridership information for each of the existing larger Handibus service providers in the Grande Prairie region comes in different formats and would ideally also capture metrics like hours of service and number of trips delivered. The monitoring recommendations outlined in **Section 9.0** should be considered for implementation.



8.2 Fare Priorities

- **Implement a Consistent Regional Handibus Fare**

Structure – The ultimate goal for all transit services within the Grande Prairie Region should be to have a fare structure that is consistent. This does not necessarily mean identical structures between the City of Grande Prairie’s conventional transit system and other specialized and regional services. But wherever possible, regional service fares should be aligned.



Proposed Fare Recommendation - Based on the best practices outlined at right, current fares in the region and elsewhere in northern Alberta and engagement feedback, the following fare structure is recommended for Regional Handibus and was used as a basis for developing revenue projections for service options in **Section 6.0**:

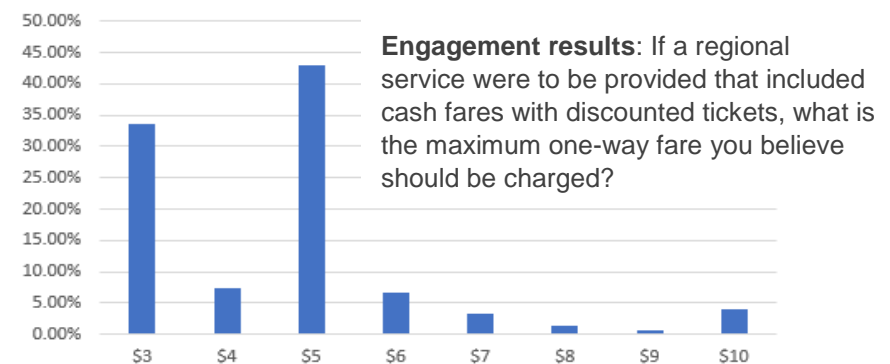
- **\$5 one-way cash fare for all regional travel** outside the City of Grande Prairie.
- **Regional books of 10 tickets** available at a 20% discount (10 rides for the price of 8: \$40).
- Ideally, **a network of vendor locations** with at least one location per community.

These fare recommendations are presented for consideration of decision makers. They should be reviewed and reconsidered in conjunction with any fare or review that may take place in future related to DTS services or the Provincial Rural Transportation Pilot Project.

In Focus: Considerations When Setting Transit Fares

Based on established best practices, the following considerations should be taken into account when setting transit fares:

- **The appropriate fare should balance passenger ability to pay and the marketability of the service with cost recovery goals.** Too high and no one will ride; too low and the service may not be financially sustainable. In this regard, fares should also generally align with pricing in other nearby jurisdictions.
- **Fares should be as consistent as possible to be easy to understand and help promote ridership.** One fare applied across a region or several passenger groups will ultimately be easier to understand and attract more riders than a more complex system based on distances multiple markets.
- **Use as few coins as possible for cash fares to promote physical ease of handling.** For people with arthritis, quarters, loonies and toonies are easier to handle than dimes.
- **Consider a discounted pre-paid fare option such as tickets or passes to reward regular customers and generate up front revenue for the system.** Tickets also provide the ability for organizations to pre-purchase fares for lower income individuals. However, also requires printing, distribution network, and monitoring/reporting processes.



8.3 Customer Information Priorities

- **Provide basic consolidated customer information on existing transportation service available in the region –**



As a starting point, consider collecting and summarizing from existing larger Handibus operators in the region a description of service levels to be provided. This

consolidated information and a downloadable summary PDF could then be posted at least annually on a central website for others to access/link to.

This information should include:

- When and where trips travel, information on who can ride, fares.
- Trip booking/contact information that can be publicly shared.

- **In tandem with any potential future implementation of integrated Regional Handibus consider the implementation of the following marketing and customer information tools:**

- **Shorter printed brochure** providing a summary of service.
- Larger printed **passenger information guide** for registered users.
- **One page poster / flyer** for key locations and health care providers.
- **Consolidated website** with all the information.
- **A fridge magnet** with the dispatch/trip booking phone number in large print.

8.4 Fleet Priorities

- **Eventually work towards a consistent specialized transit / Regional Handibus vehicle in the region:** While



the Base Service Option has been designed to potentially work with existing service provider vehicles in the region, consolidating vehicle into consistent

types makes it easier for passengers to use and also provides the ability to reduce costs through procurement, parts supply, maintenance and driver training, etc. Over the longer term, the goal would be to obtain two identical replacement vehicles.

Based on weather and service design, recommended vehicles Regional Handibus vehicles at this time would be 20-passenger high floor minibuses with a rear or side lift and the space to carry up to four passengers using wheelchairs. Estimated one-time capital purchase costs for a new vehicle of this type is approximately \$225,000.



8.5 Infrastructure Priorities

- **Indoor Vehicle Storage** – Depending on the service delivery model selected, future planning for Regional Handibus should consider opportunities to obtain indoor vehicle storage near the terminus point(s) of service with appropriate amenities (space for cleaning supplies and system customer information materials, secure revenue storage if applicable, etc.). Potentially this location could be in partnership with another organization. For instance, as part of this Study, staff at the Village of Hythe noted that they are considering potentially expanding public works vehicle storage.



- **Signage and passenger amenities at key community pick up locations** - While Regional Handibus is not a true fixed-route “bus stop” based system, some communities have found it helpful to install signage at key pick up locations. This signage helps promote the service in the community and also confirms for new passengers that they are in the right place.

Information on signage could include days of service, who can ride, and contact information to book travel or find out more. Ideally these locations and signage may also align with Provincial Rural Transportation Pilot Project bus stops if that service also moves forward for implementation.

While designated pick up locations should have provision for passengers to wait inside (i.e. at community facilities or larger seniors buildings), these locations would ideally also have available indoor seating where waiting passengers can see arriving vehicles, outdoor seating that is covered, garbage receptacle, space to post system information and access to a phone.

- **Private property acknowledgement / agreement of use** – Current Handibus services routinely pick up and drop off passengers on private property (e.g. Walmart, Prairie Mall). As Regional Handibus service becomes more integrated and organized—particularly if these locations are listed as regular destinations in service schedules, a more formal acknowledgement of this arrangement or agreement of use may be required or at least prudent.

8.6 Technology Priorities

- **Continue to reassess application of emerging technology as Regional Handibus service matures –**



There are many ways that technology can make transit passenger experience and operations easier, including online trip booking, automated notifications, real-time vehicle location and schedule information, smart card payment systems, integration with potential ride hailing partners, dispatch software and client management systems. These are all useful.

However, the recommended priority for Regional Handibus in the short term should be implementing integrated service and developing the underlying structures and often quite basic processes required for this, and not on implementing technology per se.

As service matures and technology use by seniors and people with a disability continues to become more

prevalent, the service should continue to assess cases where further technology improvements can improve Handibus efficiency and effectiveness. To be most cost effective, ideally these efforts should be coordinate in partnership with other transportation services and organizations in the region.



9.0 MONITORING FRAMEWORK

Service monitoring can be a tremendous tool to monitor and refine service holistically within the Grande Prairie region. It is recommended that in concert with other activities to pursue a more collaborative approach to transit, area partners consider implementing a consistent service monitoring framework.

As all existing Handibus transportation providers in the region currently submit performance information as part of the County of Grande Prairie's Seniors and Special Needs Transportation Operating Assistance Grant program, the region is actually far ahead of many others in Alberta in terms of undertaking consistent monitoring across services.

Therefore, the main service monitoring recommendation of this Study is simply to consider building on this base by expanding the metrics collected and the frequency of reporting. Specific recommendations include:

- Determine who and how increased monitoring information will be collected and if there are resource implications. Ideally a designated specific partner/staff person serves the function as acting as the point person for collecting, summarizing and reporting on system statistics.

In Focus: What is a “Revenue Hour” of Service?

A revenue hour is the unit by which the supply of transit service is measured. One revenue hour is equal to one vehicle on the road for one hour of service, excluding deadhead time travelling to/from garage, maintenance and training. (Source: Canadian Urban Transit Assoc.)

- Increase the categories of information collected from larger existing Handibus service providers to include:
 - **Number of hours of service delivered.** For instance, the total time that the bus is in service.
 - **The number of days or trips delivered.** This indicator along with hours above enables ridership information to be more meaningfully analyzed and compared.
 - **The number of unmet trips.** This includes cases where a potential passenger tries to book service but cannot be accommodated due to lack of availability of service or capacity. This indicator helps plan for additional service that may be required to meet demand.
- Request that ridership information and the metrics noted above be tracked and summarized on a monthly basis and submitted at least annually. To help facilitate this, some organizations provide a simple Excel spreadsheet and/or PDF form for service providers to record and submit their information.
- On an annual basis, seek financial performance information from larger Handibus service providers as well as the necessary permissions to publicly share and summarize total operating costs, total revenue, total capital costs, total municipal subsidy and total of any charitable funding sources. (Detailed financial information underlying these totals would not be shared).

10.0 SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing from the many observations and recommendations within this Study, there are several priority actions that partner municipalities and existing area Handibus service providers can take to improve mobility in the Grande Prairie region for those who have fewer transportation options, particularly seniors and disabled residents.

These actions create the foundation and path to implement a more integrated Regional Handibus service. Even if full scale implementation of an integrated solution is not pursued, many

of these steps also offer a way to improve the utilization and community benefit of the many existing Handibus services.

The following provides a summary of the Grande Prairie Regional Handibus Feasibility Study's key recommendations. These recommendations are listed in a suggested priority order based on their relative ease of implementation and the logical progression that other regions have used to successfully integrate and improve transit services across multiple jurisdictions and service providers.

GRANDE PRAIRIE REGIONAL HANDIBUS FEASIBILITY STUDY – SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation	Description and Rationale	Resource, Operational and Governance Implications
Suggested Timing: Shorter Term – Next 1-2 Years		
1. Municipal Regional Transportation Coordination	<p>Create a municipal staff-level Regional Transportation Staff Working Group to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate and guide next steps in a regional Handibus process. Ensure alignment with any implementation of the Rural Transportation Pilot Project. Liaise with individual Councils and existing service providers. <p>Rationale: A key initial foundation required to more formally improve transportation services across the region.</p>	<p>Mainly Impacts: All participating municipalities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would require staff time, potentially technical support.
2. Improve Monitoring Processes	<p>Consider collecting further performance information from existing larger Handibus operators in the region. This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simple form that tracks actual ridership on a monthly basis. Hours of service and number of trips delivered. Information could still be submitted annually. <p>Rationale: Better tracks outcome of investment, creates baseline for future.</p>	<p>Mainly Impacts: County, larger service providers, participating municipalities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would require one-time changes by County staff, slight change to ongoing reporting processes for service providers.

GRANDE PRAIRIE REGIONAL HANDIBUS FEASIBILITY STUDY – SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS, CONTINUED

Recommendation	Description and Rationale	Resource, Operational and Governance Implications
Suggested Timing: Short - Medium Term – Next 1-4 Years		
3. Consolidate Public Information and Service Communication	<p>Consider collecting and summarizing from existing larger Handibus operators in the region a description of service levels to be provided. This consolidated information and a downloadable summary PDF could then be posted at least annually on a central website for others to access/link to and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When and where trips travel, information on who can ride, fares. • Trip booking/contact information that can be publicly shared. <p>Rationale: Would better enable communication of existing options.</p>	<p>Mainly Impacts: County, larger service providers, participating municipalities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would require one-time changes by County staff, service providers. • Annual/semi-annual updates to website and information.
4. Provide Guidance on Desired Registration Process	<p>Consider providing larger existing Handibus service providers (excluding the DTS which already has a registration process) with a short outline of a sample client registration process and describe why it is helpful:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a sample form and simple Excel table for tracking information. • Provide an overarching sample checklist for maintaining privacy and security for this information. <p>As part of any transportation grant process in the region it may also be useful to request information from larger providers on Alberta Transportation Operating Authority and insurance levels, where applicable.</p> <p>Rationale: Lack of client registration information is a risk of current services.</p>	<p>Mainly Impacts: County, larger service providers, participating municipalities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would require one-time changes by County staff, service providers.
5. Explore Further Partnership with Grande Spirit Foundation	<p>Work with the Grande Spirit Foundation to explore further opportunities to support the transportation that makes regional housing more viable, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to access municipal taxation requisition funds collected through through the Foundation to fund supporting Handibus transportation. • Support in kind, such as centralizing dispatch, registration or service communication (depending on long term service model outlook). <p>Rationale: Locating seniors housing in areas distant from services is a key factor in creating transportation need and ridership demand; taxation processes supporting Grande Spirit are an existing, established funding mechanism.</p>	<p>Mainly Impacts: All municipalities, Grande Spirit Foundation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier to pursue if Regional Transportation Staff Working Group created (Recommendation #1); potential to include Grande Spirit Foundation staff in that group. • Would require staff time.

GRANDE PRAIRIE REGIONAL HANDIBUS FEASIBILITY STUDY – SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS, CONTINUED

Recommendation	Description and Rationale	Resource, Operational and Governance Implications
Suggested Timing: Medium Term – Next 2-5 Years		
6. Create Structures to Improve Service Provider Consistency and Coordination	<p>Consider creating a Service Provider Working Group to share information, best practices among larger existing Handibus service providers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include service provider to key administrators/lead drivers. • A short annual workshop to compare policies, practices might be a good starting point, plus an ongoing contact list to seek solutions. <p>This group would be coordinated by municipal staff and may also liaise with municipal staff-level Regional Transportation Staff Working Group.</p> <p>Rationale: Would provide more resilience and consistency to current services and ability to improve together. Would also provide initial foundation from which more formal integration of service or policies could grow.</p>	<p>Mainly Impacts: County, larger service providers, participating municipalities.</p> <p>Would require designating who was going to take the lead, resources or other technical support required, potentially extra provision in Grant for drivers to attend.</p>
7. Consolidate Regional Fare and Eligibility Policies	<p>Leverage any fare or eligibility review that may take place in future to also consider regional fare/eligibility implications, such as in conjunction with any processes related to DTS services or the Provincial Rural Transportation Pilot Project. Ideally this should include exploration of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidation of existing fares for all services outside City. • Removal of current purpose-based DTS fares for Clairmont. • Creation of discounted books of regional tickets. • Alignment of DTS and regional transportation policies with each other and current industry best practices. • Determination of a revised registration process that included a functional assessment of abilities by a trained Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist. <p>Rationale: Consolidation is a helpful step to move towards integration that does not necessarily require operating or governance changes to implement.</p>	<p>Mainly Impacts: All service providers, passengers, affected municipalities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier to pursue if part of an overarching plan to consolidate and improve service.

GRANDE PRAIRIE REGIONAL HANDIBUS FEASIBILITY STUDY – SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS, CONTINUED

Recommendation	Description and Rationale	Resource, Operational and Governance Implications
Suggested Timing: Medium Term – Next 2-5 Years		
8. Implement Initial Service Improvements	<p>Implement initial service improvements by primarily reallocating existing resources and operating structures, such as coordination to share the existing Hythe and Wembley vehicles on the West corridor and existing Grande Spirit Foundation and DTS resources on the North corridor.</p> <p>Note that a key first step in implementing this service change or any other is applying for revised Alberta Transportation Operating Authority using the process described in the full report.</p> <p>Rationale: While a more formal consolidation of services is “cleaner” and is more optimal in the long run, the initial integration described provides an opportunity to take incremental steps towards service improvements that don’t necessarily require governance changes or stable central operating entity. Improvements to each corridor could potentially move forward separately.</p>	<p>Mainly Impacts: Service providers, passengers, municipalities and funders for each corridor.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier to pursue if Regional Transportation Staff Working Group created (Recommendation #1); potential to include Grande Spirit Foundation staff in that group. • Easier to pursue if part of an overarching plan to consolidate and improve service.

11.0 CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

11.1 Conclusions

Previous experience with other communities who have successfully collaborated to create a more integrated and effective approach to transit in their regions has demonstrated that there tend to be three preconditions for success:

1. A willingness to work together.
2. A shared conviction that an integrated solution will deliver more value to the whole, even though it may mean giving up some individual control.
3. An openness to pursuing change towards a larger vision through incremental steps, as well as to giving the process enough time.

In our work on this project, the consulting team has clearly witnessed the first condition of willingness to work together in our interactions with the Steering Committee members and the other municipal staff and elected officials who have helped



guide this process.

Likewise, many of these same individuals and the larger group of citizens, stakeholders and existing service providers have stated their support for the second condition's integrated solutions.

Through our work and this document we hope that we have provided clear guidance on the third condition by outlining the path of iterative steps that can be taken to improve transportation service for seniors, people with a disability and others in the Grande Prairie region.

While immediate implementation of structural changes can be tantalizing, our experience has shown that starting with relationship-building and the establishment of integrated processes first is usually the more effective route to implementing successful structural change.

Beyond outlining how Regional Handibus might evolve in the Grande Prairie area, this Study also supports the conviction that a more collaborative approach to Handibus services will deliver more value to the whole:

- There is demonstrated demand for Regional Handibus in the Grande Prairie area based on demographic trend, and the location of community services and seniors housing.
- By creating the conditions to attract and retain residents, transit is also a wise investment in the long term economic viability of smaller communities.
- Finally, rather than starting with nothing, the existence of so many Handibus services already operating in the region provides a strong existing foundation of resources and expertise that can be further coordinated to accomplish more, together.

11.2 Recommended Next Steps

The Grande Prairie Regional Handibus Feasibility Study outlines a path for the region's municipalities to provide seniors, people with a disability and others with improved service to meet existing and future transportation need.

The provision of improved connection makes it more feasible for residents to age in place, thereby supporting the ongoing stability and sustainability of smaller communities. There may also be opportunity to further leverage the benefits of regional Handibus through coordination with potential outcomes of the Provincial Rural Transportation Pilot Project.

As this study was undertaken based on a grant received by the Town of Wembley, the final report will be provided to the Town for its receipt. It is suggested the Town then circulate the final report to partner municipalities with a recommendation that:

- The report be the subject of a presentation to the next Intermunicipal Meeting in fall 2018 for discussion on next steps. Recognizing that current staff capacity to administer this project is limited and that the project may also be influenced by outcomes of the Provincial Rural Transportation Pilot Project, next steps may include:
 - Allocating sufficient resources and directing staff to form a Regional Transportation Staff Working Group to determine the preferred regional transportation governance and staffing approach, as well as fiscal and logistical implications of the consultant's report.
 - Requesting that the working group report back at a subsequent Intermunicipal Meeting by spring 2019.



APPENDICES

Appendix A: High Level Summary of Funding Sources

The most common funding sources for transit of all types in Canada are municipal property taxes, passenger fares and advertising. A number of jurisdictions also have access to a municipal motor fuel tax. The following provides a high-level list of other funding streams that may be applicable to Grande Prairie Regional Handibus.

- **Municipal Requisition Funds Collected Through Grande Spirit Foundation** – The Grande Spirit Foundation (GSF) annually requisitions property tax funds collected by its member municipalities to fund operating deficits approved by its Board. (i.e. initiatives not covered by other grants or revenue from its housing streams).
 - Pending further discussion with the GSF, there may be an opportunity to access these funds for transportation since access and mobility for residents of larger regionally-located seniors facilities is a key driver of travel need and also a factor in the success of these buildings.
 - An example of a somewhat similar arrangement is the 2011 agreement that enabled Hythe Pioneer Homes access to the requisition funds collected by the GSF.
- **Municipal Sustainability Initiative (MSI) + Basic Municipal Transportation Grant (BMTG)** - MSI funding is based on population, education property tax and road km; BMTG funding for urban cities is based on population, and for rural towns, villages and districts is based on population, road km, equalized assessment and terrain
 - Municipalities determine project / activities to be funded, and these funds can be allocated to other municipalities, regional services, or non-profit organizations (NPOs).
 - Eligible capital projects include municipal roads, public transit vehicles/ facilities, and eligible operating projects such as municipal services, planning activities and assistance to NPOs. All six partner municipalities for this project currently receive this funding.
 - More info: <http://www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/msi-funding-allocations-eligibility>;
https://www.transportation.alberta.ca/images/BMTG_Guidelines_November_2013.pdf

- **Community Initiatives Programs** – Supports services for seniors, providing funding for up to \$75,000, with a maximum operating budget.
 - NPOs or collaboratives with NPOs that may include municipalities are eligible.
 - More information:
 - <http://www.culturetourism.alberta.ca/community/community-grants/community-initiatives-program>;
 - <http://www.culturetourism.alberta.ca/community/community-grants/community-initiatives-program/operating-grant/>
- **Federal Gas Tax Fund** - Municipalities determine projects and activities to be funded based on qualification criteria, but this only covers capital costs (vehicle purchases, facilities, etc.)
 - Funding is awarded per capita – municipalities receive a minimum of 50k, and summer villages receive a minimum of 5k in addition to per capita amount.
 - More information:
 - <http://municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/materials-and-resources>.
- **New Horizons for Seniors Program Community Base Projects** - Applies to seniors programs led by NPOs and municipalities with a maximum funding of \$25,000.
 - This funding could be put towards fleet expansion if it appears to meet the program objectives, which Regional Handibus appears that it would.
 - More information:
 - <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/canada/employment-social-development/services/funding/new-horizons-seniors-community-based/applicant-guide.pdf>.
- **United Way and Other Charitable Funding Sources** – The structure of the service delivery model—such as continued involvement of a charitable non-profit—may impact the ability to gain or retain funding within this stream.

Appendix B: Overview of Cost Apportionment Methods

In regional transit services funded by more than one municipality, there are several different measures that can be used to allocate shares of transit operating and capital costs between jurisdictions. These methods may also be weighted or averaged and combined together, such as using a blended rate that combines population and level of service provided.

The following provides an overview³ of the most common cost sharing methods and they are grouped into whether they are recommended to be more or less applicable to Regional Handibus (and potentially the Provincial Rural Transportation Pilot Project).

MEASURES LIKELY MORE APPLICABLE TO REGIONAL HANDIBUS		
Cost-Sharing Measure	Description and Data Source	Potential Benefits or Challenges
Number of days of service or trips by area	This measure looks at either the number of days of service or the number of trips provided to each jurisdiction over an average week (i.e. one that does not include statutory holidays). Source for this information is the final published service information/schedule for the transit service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In cases where some jurisdictions will receive more service than others within a system, this measure clearly shows the level of benefit to each. • As this measure is based on the published schedule or public information materials (in the case of services that may not have a schedule), it is easily replicable and adapts as service evolves, for instance if the level of transit service expands further to some areas but not others. • Using the number of trips per week is the most accurate. However, in cases where schedules may be flexible or may be repeatedly adjusted, days of service per week may provide an alternate measure that balances relative accuracy with stability.
Property assessment by area	This measure apportions costs based on property assessment information by jurisdiction. Its source is existing municipal assessment rolls and property taxation processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This measure is an easily identifiable source that takes into account the relative ability for different jurisdictions to pay for service. • It may not take into account relative benefit if some jurisdictions receive more service than others. However, this can be addressed if the measure is blended with a measure that takes into account the relative days/trips, hours or kilometres of service. • This measure will not take into account partners that are outside of the current taxation structure, such as First Nations or organizations that may wish to partner with the system (seniors housing, health authorities, non-profits, etc.)

³ This information is adapted from an overview developed to support implementation of BC Transit's Highway 16 Intercommunity Transit Service.

MEASURES LIKELY MORE APPLICABLE TO REGIONAL HANDIBUS, CONTINUED		
Cost-Sharing Measure	Description and Data Source	Potential Benefits or Challenges
Population by area	This measure apportions costs based on population by jurisdiction. Its source is typically Statistics Canada Census information by community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Like property assessment by area, this measure uses population size as a way of trying to take into account the relative ability for different jurisdictions to pay for service, especially when there are a range of community sizes participating. Like property assessment, it may be possible to blend this measure with others to take into account cases where more service is provided to some jurisdictions than others. This measure can be more easily applied to communities that do not participate in local government taxation structures. In the case where some participating communities may have substantially different populations than others (such as the City of Grande Prairie and the Village of Hythe), blending this measure at a specific percentage with other measures may be helpful.
Assignment by maximum cost	The measure assigns a specific dollar value or percentage contribution to a partner. An assigned value may be negotiated for all partners or may be applied to one or a few, with the remainder using the other measures described. The source for this is discussion and negotiation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In cases where an ongoing apportionment through the other measures cannot be determined or where the results are found to be less equitable or attainable, it is possible to use this method for some or all partners. The use of this measure can especially be helpful in cases where use or benefit of the service cannot be directly defined, such as if a business or institution wishes to contribute to the service. It may also be useful in cases where very large or very small communities participating in the same service cannot come to an agreed ratio based on population or assessment. The main drawback to this measure is that it is harder to update as service evolves, especially if service to some areas grows faster than others. It may also be subject to more fluctuation than other methods as political representatives for areas change. However, if it provides near-term certainty of costs that enables some partners to participate, it may be worth it.
Passenger activity by area	This measure looks at the number of passenger boardings and alightings by area (i.e. the number of passengers getting on and off the bus within each community). In smaller systems, the source for this information is typically ridership counts undertaken by transit drivers and/or passenger manifests (i.e. the dispatch records)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This measure can be helpful in cases where some communities may use transit more than others and therefore may be contributing a higher portion of passenger revenue through fares. The challenge with applying this measure to a new service such as that proposed for Regional Handibus is that initial apportionment would be based on estimated usage which may not be accurate. This measure may also fluctuate over the initial years of service as communities become used to the service and ridership grows and stabilizes.

MEASURES LIKELY <u>LESS</u> APPLICABLE TO REGIONAL HANDIBUS		
Cost-Sharing Measure	Description and Data Source	Potential Benefits or Challenges
Service hours by area	Number of hours of service provided within each jurisdiction. Source for this would typically be the approximate schedule for service, potentially refined from trip manifest records tracking how long the bus is within each area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This measure is best used for transit systems that offer routes or services primarily within specific areas. • Due to the linear nature of the proposed Regional Handibus services—where the same bus serves multiple jurisdictions along its path—this measure is not recommended for Regional Handibus local cost-sharing.
Route length by area	Similar to service hours by area, this measure uses the number of kilometres of service provided by jurisdiction. This is only practical in services that use purpose-build specialized transit dispatch software and/or vehicle GPS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This measure can be a helpful substitute or additional criterion in cases where there is a mix of urban and rural services, since rural services that require substantial highway driving may have different cost impacts but lower levels of ridership than more urban services in the same system. • Like service hours, this measure is best used in cases where different services serve different geographic areas and not in the case of linear service like the proposed Regional Handibus trips.
Fleet allocation by area	This measure is used in some systems to allocate fleet lease fees by jurisdiction. It uses trip manifests or exports from a specialized transit dispatch system to determine the relative number of vehicles in use for each area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In cases where the number of vehicles required varies significantly by jurisdiction within a transit system, this measure can be helpful. • However, this measure is not recommended for Grande Prairie Regional Handibus since the linear nature of the service makes it less relevant.

