Red Deer County
Community and Protective Services

Public Transportation Feasibility Study
Final Report

Red Deer County, AB

May 2008
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iTRANS Consulting Inc.
100 York Blvd., Suite 300
Richmond Hill, ON L4B 1J8
Tel: (905) 882-4100
Fax: (905) 882-1557
Email: itrans@itransconsulting.com
www.itransconsulting.com

Project #4031
Client Project Team

Project Manager          Jo-Ann Symington (Red Deer County)
Project Team             Pauli Kruger (Red Deer County)

iTRANS Project Team

Principal and Project Manager      Wally Beck, C.E.T.
Technical Team                    Mark Mis, MBA
                                  Barry McGlaughlin, M.A.
                                  Sherwin Gumbs, P. Eng.
Advisors                          Charles Fitzsimmons, B.A., C.A.E.
                                  (TechKnowledge Consulting)
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Appendices

A. Red Deer County Community Survey
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Study Purpose

In 2004, Red Deer County carried out the Community Service Needs Assessment (CSNA) and the Assessment of Travel Demand (ATD) and Route Analysis for a Connector from Red Deer to Gasoline Alley. Following the completion of those initiatives, the County identified a number of needs and issues related to meeting the demand for public transportation in the community.

In response to those needs and issues, the purpose of this study was to:
- Assess how public transportation needs are being met today such as through volunteer agencies, which serve those with mobility problems
- Quantify the current latent demand for both Conventional Transit and Specialized Transit
- Identify the gaps and opportunities available in the provision of transportation
- Identify strategies to address various target markets (students, seniors, employees, medical patient transfers, etc.)
- Identify appropriate vehicles and service levels required to meet the demand
- Review legislative and licensing requirements
- Identify sources of internal and external funding
- Develop route and service design concepts (routing, hours of operation, costs, etc.)
- Identify low-cost methods of service delivery, where appropriate
- Develop a service and phasing plan and budget that is fiscally responsible

1.2 Project Needs and Objectives

With its attractive landscapes and prime location along Gasoline Alley, Red Deer County is experiencing its share of the population boom that has become synonymous with the Province of Alberta. The expected increase in the number of citizens, and the pressures on the community infrastructure that go along with this level of growth over the next few decades will be unprecedented. For instance, the Hamlet of Springbrook, with a 2006 population of 900, is expected to have a population of 5,000 to 8,000 residents within ten to 15 years.

This growth, in tandem with the issue of an aging population, will put a strain on resources, including the demand for transportation to public services such as medical and recreational facilities. At present, Red Deer County’s population of 18,639 has the majority of its residents living in urban (town) settings with the balance spread throughout the more rural areas.
Although Red Deer County is rural for the most part and has no Conventional public transit service, the residential and commercial areas are focused in Gasoline Alley, which lies adjacent to Red Deer City where public transportation is provided only minutes away. It is for this reason that iTRANS undertook a Peer Review of Red Deer Transit to help determine how service can be extended from Red Deer City and what the relative performance expectations would be in terms of costs and demand.

### 1.3 Study Methodology

To meet the project needs and objectives, the following steps were undertaken relative to assessing public transportation needs in Red Deer County:

- Conducted a peer review of similar-sized municipalities and identification of best practices
- Conducted Stakeholder consultations and focus group sessions
- Conducted a web-based community survey
- Identified and developed a relevant policies and assessment framework to evaluate the performance of public transportation services
- Identified initial service concept design options, along with the associated capital and operating costs, and other economic, social and environmental benefits of each option
- Identified funding opportunities and revenue streams in support of public transportation
- Developed a service implementation plan and ridership growth strategy
2. PEER REVIEWS

iTRANS identified a number of similar-sized municipalities across Canada to conduct a peer review of both Conventional Transit and Specialized Transit systems.

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of a peer review is to assist the County and its Stakeholders in assessing itself against its peers, thereby establishing reasonable expectations for service enhancements both in the present and the future, and to do this during the initial stages of the study. The peer reviews have been carefully interpreted since environments can vary significantly from one municipality to another across Canada; thus, they have been used for order-of-magnitude comparisons only.

2.2 Methodology

This review uses data from the same dataset used to produce the 2006 CUTA Transit Systems Fact Book and compared various operating, financial and performance data to provide a general assessment of how Red Deer County’s transit services could compare to those offered in other similar communities.

2.3 Peer Review Results

Given the proximity of Gasoline Alley to Red Deer City yet the rural nature of Red Deer County, iTRANS undertook three peer reviews:
1. Conventional Transit Peer Review Group 1: Population up to 100,000 to determine the relative efficiency and effectiveness of Red Deer Transit
2. Conventional Transit Peer Review Group 2: Population up to 30,000
3. Specialized Transit Peer Review Group 2: Population up to 30,000

2.3.1 Conventional Transit Peer Review Group 1 Results

iTRANS had undertaken a peer review of key statistics between Red Deer City and other municipalities in its population range of up to 100,000 residents. The objective was to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of the service provided since it would be logical to approach Red Deer Transit to extend services to at least the Gasoline Alley area of Red Deer County. The key indicators as illustrated in Exhibit 1 through Exhibit 4 were presented to the Steering Committee during the initial Stakeholder consultations.
Exhibit 1 and Exhibit 2 suggests that while Red Deer City has the highest service hours per capita, it also enjoys one of the highest efficiency ratings, measured in passengers per hour. Clearly, these elevated levels of transit services have made an impact as the community appears to be responding positively. This is important especially since it is well known that there is a direct correlation between the level of service provided in a community and the demand for service. In other words, the higher the level of service, the bigger the market and the more people will use transit. This is illustrated in Exhibit 3.
Exhibit 3: Passengers per Capita vs. Revenue Service Hours per Capita

![Passengers per capita Vs Service hours per capita](image)

Exhibit 4: Net Cost per Capita

![Net Cost Per Capita](image)

It is interesting to note that Red Deer Transit has an average revenue / cost ratio while maintaining one of the lowest fares among its peers by a significant margin. Given that we had previously identified Red Deer Transit as one of the peer transit systems with the highest service hours per capita, having one of the lowest fares can help explain why its net cost per capita is higher than the median, despite being offset by the higher ridership levels.

The conclusion drawn from the Red Deer Transit peer review is that the Red Deer Transit system is relatively efficient and effective and as such, should be explored as a potential service provider.
2.3.2  Conventional Transit Peer Review Group 2 Results

Table 1 provides a comparison of key statistics in other municipalities in its peer group of municipalities with up to 30,000 residents.

Table 1: Conventional Transit Peer Review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRANSIT AGENCY</th>
<th>PROVINCE</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Service Hours per Capita</th>
<th>Passengers per Capita</th>
<th>Passengers per Hour</th>
<th>Average Speed (mph)</th>
<th>Pass. per Hr. Vs Service Hrs / Capita</th>
<th>Cost per Revenue Hour</th>
<th>Fare Revenue per Hour</th>
<th>Net Cost per Capita</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELLIOT LAKE</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>12,800</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>$62</td>
<td>$38</td>
<td>$13.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KENORA</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>13,407</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>$50</td>
<td>$31</td>
<td>$0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOYALIST</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>$55</td>
<td>$27</td>
<td>$9.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PORT HOPE</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>$60</td>
<td>$14</td>
<td>$9.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLLINGWOOD</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>15,993</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>$37</td>
<td>$10</td>
<td>$9.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIDLAND</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>16,700</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>$52</td>
<td>$20</td>
<td>$5.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORNWICK</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>$61</td>
<td>$19</td>
<td>$17.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUNTSVILLE</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>15,600</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>$44</td>
<td>$6</td>
<td>$5.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YELLOWKNIFE</td>
<td>YT</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>$65</td>
<td>$25</td>
<td>$21.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRISKERVILLE</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>19,378</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>$49</td>
<td>$31</td>
<td>$15.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLARENCE-ROCKLAND</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>20,600</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>$49</td>
<td>$31</td>
<td>$15.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLONIES</td>
<td>NL</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>$68</td>
<td>$27</td>
<td>$20.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WILLOWCHICHE</td>
<td>NT</td>
<td>22,200</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>$173</td>
<td>$26</td>
<td>$47.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEORGETOWN</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>27,100</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>$56</td>
<td>$21</td>
<td>$2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORANGEVILLE</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>27,500</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>$46</td>
<td>$9</td>
<td>$13.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORT ERIE</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>26,000</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>$33</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$3.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRATFORD</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>30,600</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>$64</td>
<td>$25</td>
<td>$35.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIAN</td>
<td></td>
<td>15,699</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>$57</td>
<td>$29</td>
<td>$13.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exhibit 5 through
Exhibit 8 graphically illustrates a number of the indicators and conclusions that can be drawn from the comparisons made.

**Exhibit 5: Annual Service Hours Per Capita**

The annual service hours per capita range from 0.1 hours to 1.0 hours, with the median value of 0.4 hours of service per capita. Based on a population of 18,000 this would equate to 7,200 hours of service or about 140 hours per week, which represents an average of 20 hours per day seven days a week of service.

**Exhibit 6: Passengers per Capita**

The median value of the demand, 3.7 passengers per capita, would translate to about 66,000 customers per year in Red Deer County or approximately 1,300 passengers per week.
Exhibit 7: Cost per Hour

The median cost per hour reported was approximately $57 but ranged from a low of $33 in Fort Erie, Ontario to $112 in Whitehorse, Yukon. The cost per hour that can be expected in Red Deer County would depend on the service hours provided and vehicle options that best meet local needs.
Exhibit 8: Net Cost per Capita

The net cost per capita represents the bottom line cost to the municipality, that is, total cost of operation less the fare revenues received and do not reflect external funding sources, which vary from province to province. The median value of the peer group is $13.05 per capita.
2.3.3 **Specialized Transit Peer Review Group 2 Results**

Table 2 provides a comparison of key statistics in other municipalities in its peer group.

**Table 2: Specialized Transit Peer Review**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROPERTY</th>
<th>PROVINCE</th>
<th>POPULATION</th>
<th>Net Operating Cost per Capita</th>
<th>Total Expense per Passenger</th>
<th>Total Expense per Eligible Passenger</th>
<th>Registrants/Capita</th>
<th>Passengers/Capita</th>
<th>Annual Trips per Registrant</th>
<th>Passenger per Hour</th>
<th>Km Per Passenger</th>
<th>Average Speed (Kph)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KENDRA</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>$4.82</td>
<td>$15.97</td>
<td>$15.81</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIddLAND</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>18,700</td>
<td>$2.83</td>
<td>$43.34</td>
<td>$43.34</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLLINGWOOD</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>17,200</td>
<td>$2.82</td>
<td>$3.21</td>
<td>$3.24</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COBOURG</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>$2.82</td>
<td>$15.92</td>
<td>$12.26</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEST ELGIN</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>19,900</td>
<td>$1.48</td>
<td>$15.92</td>
<td>$12.65</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YELLOWKNIFE</td>
<td>YT</td>
<td>18,700</td>
<td>$2.82</td>
<td>$15.92</td>
<td>$12.26</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BROCKVILLE</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>19,128</td>
<td>$12.01</td>
<td>$13.92</td>
<td>$16.23</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KINARA LAKES</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>19,361</td>
<td>$3.09</td>
<td>$49.95</td>
<td>$53.15</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>12.3</td>
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<td>NORTH HURON</td>
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<td>19,395</td>
<td>$3.09</td>
<td>$49.95</td>
<td>$53.15</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>DUNKERW</td>
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<td>$4.84</td>
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<td>$18.03</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>20.03</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>20.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>OWEI SOUND</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>21,000</td>
<td>$4.92</td>
<td>$23.71</td>
<td>$20.08</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>11.53</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEMBROKE</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>21,000</td>
<td>$4.92</td>
<td>$12.90</td>
<td>$15.49</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHITE HOUSE</td>
<td>NT</td>
<td>22,131</td>
<td>$18.25</td>
<td>$47.75</td>
<td>$47.75</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORT ERIE</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>28,000</td>
<td>$4.48</td>
<td>$12.05</td>
<td>$12.05</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIRWAYS</td>
<td>AB</td>
<td>29,020</td>
<td>$4.82</td>
<td>$15.97</td>
<td>$15.03</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MEDIAN</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>19,361</strong></td>
<td><strong>$4.82</strong></td>
<td><strong>$15.97</strong></td>
<td><strong>$15.03</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.65</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.3448</strong></td>
<td><strong>30.12</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>8.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exhibit 9 through
Exhibit 12 graphically illustrates a number of the indicators and conclusions that can be drawn from the comparisons made.

Exhibit 9: Registrants per Capita

The number of registrants for Specialized Transit service is dictated by the eligibility criteria in a municipality. Eligibility refers to those that qualify for using the door-to-door wheelchair accessible transit service. As the population ages, there will be an increase since fewer people will be able to drive. The median value, 1.5% of the population, translates to approximately 280 persons in Red Deer County.
Exhibit 10: Trips per Customer

The amount of trips taken by customers of Specialized Transit varies depending on the degree of the disability, their individual travel needs, and availability of family members or volunteers to meet their travel needs. The median value of 30 trips per registrant represents about 8,400 trips per year if applied to Red Deer County.

Exhibit 11: Expense per Passenger

The median cost per trip in the peer group approximates $18. This varies significantly depending on a number of factors (e.g. size of service area, labour costs, etc.) but nonetheless indicates that travel can be relatively expensive compared to, for example, volunteer services.
Many factors impact the net taxpayer cost to support Specialized Transit service in a community. The peer review revealed that the range can be significant – from $1.38 to $16.25 per capita; however, the median value of $4.62 per capita provides a guide that can be followed when establishing reasonable expectations.

### 2.4 Community Investment in Public Transportation

Based on the Conventional Transit and Specialized Transit peer reviews, the median net investment per capita was $13.05 and $4.62, respectively, for a total of $17.67 per year. Net investment per capita is calculated as the total cost less passenger fares paid and other revenues (e.g. bus advertising, etc.). To put the investment of $17.67 per capita into perspective, if the investment were applied in Red Deer County, the average cost per household (based on 2.3 persons per household) would approximate $40, which less than the average cost of a tank of gas each year.

It is clear that additional investment is needed to improve quality of life for many existing and future residents and to provide a more competitive community in terms of attracting businesses by providing residents with access to jobs. The next step in the study was to assess community needs and determine priorities through a comprehensive Stakeholder consultation process, followed by the identification of service delivery models that would meet the needs identified, which will in turn, determine the financial support required.
3. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

3.1 Transit Focus Groups

As part of this study, iTRANS conducted a series of Stakeholder consultations called Transit Focus Groups (TFGs) to ensure and encourage input from the public at large (both transit customers and non-transit customers) and the business community.

iTRANS held meetings with the Project Steering Committee, three distinct TFGs and an Open House on June 19, 2007.

For the three TFGs, the target audiences were as follows:
1. County business owners and representatives
2. Red Deer Transit
3. General public (open invitation)

The following section summarizes and presents the main issues raised at each TFG and the Open House. A detailed account of the series of consultations can be found below.

3.1.1 Red Deer County Business Transit Focus Group

The consultant team presented the study objectives and the Work Plan to County business owners in attendance and encouraged dialogue to gather feedback. Many business owners expressed the need for transit services to meet the transportation demands of their clientele and employees. In particular, the lack of public transportation serving the County has made it difficult for businesses to attract and retain employees, especially since the vast number of their employees (about 90%) are known to live in the Red Deer City and the transportation facilities there (along with other lifestyle factors) makes it a more appealing destination to seek employment.

Increasing costs of owning and operating a vehicle has further accelerated the need for transit services within the County, as well as to and from Red Deer City.

Other highlights and conclusions stemming from the TFG with County businesses include the following:

- From the input received from the business owners, it is evident that transit services between Red Deer City and employment centres in the County (e.g. Gasoline Alley) has to be the priority in order to attract potential employees and meet their mobility needs.
- Some businesses have adopted short-term measures such as providing free taxi services to some of their employees as well as rides home using the owners’ personal vehicles. Nevertheless, more viable solutions are needed for the future as there are insufficient taxis, their fares are costly and there is a concern for legal liability should accidents occur when the employees are being driven home by the owners.
- It was also noted that the rapidly diminishing number of parking spaces available in some major trip destinations such as Red Deer College is adding to the need for transit.
The need for public transit is critical not only for existing businesses but also to protect the long-term growth of the County as potential businesses and residents view the availability of transit as an advantage and subsequently, the lack of an adequate system could impact decisions on whether they locate in the County.

### 3.1.2 Red Deer Transit Focus Group

Given the obvious interdependency and synergies that exist between Red Deer City and Red Deer County, it was necessary to obtain input and support from the City’s Transit Department. On June 19, 2007 iTRANS met with Mr. Kevin Joll, Transit Manager, Red Deer City, to discuss existing issues and opportunities as they relate to the objectives of this study.

In view of the need to provide transit services to the rest of the County beyond the boundaries of the City, the focus of the discussion was on three key topics:

1. The cost-sharing of key bus routes that travel between major points in the County and Red Deer Transit bus transfer locations via city streets; hence avoiding the need to have a “closed door” policy and thereby maintaining the image of the transit system as one which provides services to all citizens.
2. The introduction of free transfers to allow County-funded transit customers to transfer to Red Deer Transit bus routes (and vice versa).
3. The provision of transit services to critical areas in immediate need such as bus routes to and from the County through Gasoline Alley (potentially via Wal-Mart), and bus services for students in the County.

Other highlights from the discussion include:

- The takeover of Specialized Transit, the Citizens Action Bus (CAB), by the City starting August 26, 2007 and the imminent increase of the hourly cost of the CAB service when the CAB drivers join the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), the same union that currently represents the City’s drivers.
- In terms of servicing Gasoline Alley, the City has indicated that there is no current opportunity (time) to deviate existing service into the area as the round trip times for the buses do not allow for it. Any new services to that area will require an additional bus.
- Red Deer Transit bus routes are experiencing increased delays due to increased traffic. As such, schedules are becoming tighter with less layover time and little margin for recovery in the round trip times of many routes.
- There are 47 buses in the existing fleet, ten of which are maintenance spares (~ 20 percent spare ratio). With the arrival of new buses in September 2007, over 50 percent of the fleet is low floor / wheelchair accessible.
- Red Deer Transit is open to the idea of having its drivers operate County bus services (both Conventional and Specialized) provided the necessary vehicles are funded by the County.
Red Deer Transit has a contract with the Catholic and Public School Boards that provides for a discount on the current student monthly pass (which costs $49 per month). A school-only pass (valid from start-up of service to 5:15pm on weekdays only) is provided to qualified students for $28 and is paid to Red Deer Transit by the school board. The student can upgrade the pass for all days and times by paying a $16 premium on top of the $28, resulting in a total cost of $44 – a $5 reduction on the current cost for other students.

Red Deer Transit possesses a charter license to operate anywhere within Alberta although this is not exercised due to the need to focus service locally with the resources available; charter rates are currently set at $74 per hour and it was noted that this rate could be negotiated if County businesses wanted immediate service.

There is a growing demand for dialysis treatments due to an aging population. This trend is evident when the demand for Specialized Transit services is further examined. At present, the main activity areas for Specialized Transit are the David Thompson Health Unit and Bethany Care Centre. Some Specialized transportation services in the County are currently contracted from the City.

3.1.3 Stakeholder Discussions

iTRANS provided a PowerPoint presentation of the study objectives and the Work Plan. The discussions highlights are provided as follows:

- Many new businesses were criticized for locating in areas where they knew transit service was not available and as such, it was felt that they should be less critical of the fact there is no public transit service.
- It was pointed out that businesses are absorbing costs to supply free taxi services to some employees.
- There is one taxi per 750 residents in Red Deer City. There are now 14 accessible taxi vehicles, 11 sedans and three accessible vans.
- The taxi sitting (waiting) rate is $35.09 per hour, while the cab fare is $3.20 + the fare by distance rate.
- Citizens Action Bus (CAB) will sometimes use taxi services if they do not have vehicles available. CAB contacts the taxi company who then dispatches their accessible van, which gives CAB priority.
- The taxi by-laws apply to Red Deer City. The County does not have a taxi by-law. This means that until the by-laws are amended, any transit service provided by taxis must meet the fare regulations for distances traveled within the City limits but any fees can be negotiated for travel within the County.
- The lack of transit reduces the quality of life of some residents. An example used is that a senior couple moved from the County to the City because they had no affordable means of getting to medical appointments and other activities (shopping, recreation, etc.). The couple sold their home but preferred to remain in the County (iTRANS identified this desire to ‘age-in-place’ is a growing phenomenon across North America).
- There are many volunteers in the County that provide transportation services and are reimbursed for their travel expense and, in some cases, for their time. The volunteers tend to be seniors; however, it is a concern that there will not be enough in the near future as more people will require volunteers due to the aging population.
- There was extensive discussion with respect to the role that Specialized Transit (e.g. CAB) plays in the area of non-emergency patient transfers (low cost vans versus expensive ambulances). This is one area that should be explored, recognizing that the Province funds the County for ambulance services.
- The service called Driving Miss Daisy provides attendant care and is available at $20 per hour to the public, which is considered prohibitive for many, especially if they live in a remote hamlet.

3.1.4 Public Open House

iTRANS provided a PowerPoint presentation of the study objectives and the work plan. The issues and discussion highlights are provided as below.

Specialized Transit:
- The Citizen’s Action Bus (CAB), recently amalgamated with Red Deer Transit, is subsidized by the City and is provided to residents in Red Deer City for travel within the City boundaries. The fare is $3.00. County residents must pay the entire cost of the service, which is considered prohibitive.
- The Red Deer Transit fleet is becoming more accessible since new bus purchases are of low floor (no step) design, which will allow easy access to those with mobility aids, strollers, etc. This will provide residents with an alternative to CAB since the use of transit allows for dynamic trip making rather than being a reservation-based service.
- It was reiterated that some County seniors have been forced to locate to the City due to the lack of affordable transportation to access City services from the County. This issue will be accentuated as the population continues to age.
- Due to the large County service area and high cost to service residents in remote areas, consideration will be given to provide at least some service, perhaps on a weekly basis.
- The County provides grants to service clubs, which provide volunteer transportation services.
- The population is aging and the need for Specialized Transit will grow.
- The extension of CAB services to the County was identified by iTRANS as the logical solution.
Public Transit Overview:
- There were a number of transit options presented:
  - Do nothing.
  - County operated service within County boundaries only.
  - County operated service connecting to Red Deer Transit.
  - Red Deer Transit service extended into the County (e.g. Gasoline Alley).
- A peer review presented by iTRANS indicated that Red Deer Transit is one of the most efficient and effective transit systems in Canada in its population range (less than 100,000); as such, it can be assumed that any extension into the County would be cost-effective as well.

Issues Identified Due to Lack of Transit:
- Obligates families to own more than one car and as such, reduces their disposable income.
- Reduces ability to access jobs.
- High cost of car ownership impoverishes people in lower income brackets.
- Increased hitch-hiking, with the attendant traffic and personal safety concerns and drawbacks.
- Hinders the County’s ability to attract new residents and businesses that need transit.
- Complicates access to Red Deer College for students.
- Inability for students to travel for various after school activities (e.g. recreation, jobs, etc.).
- Parents obligated to drive students or to purchase additional vehicle(s).

Priority Markets for Transit:
- Students and young adults (ages 12 to 25).
- The disabled and seniors / frail.
- Low income residents.
- The growing number of new Canadians coming to the area come from countries where transit is a given. Living in the County is less attractive than the City.

Service and Vehicle Alternatives:
The types of vehicles that can be used were described and the following strategies and concerns were discussed:
- Vehicle types were described:
  - Conventional Transit.
  - Specialized Transit.
  - Dial-a-bus.
  - Vans.
  - Taxis (demand responsive or fixed route shared ride taxis).
- Vehicle type should match the demand.
- People do not want to see service introduced and have empty buses circulating around. iTRANS cautioned that it can take time to develop ridership, perhaps a high school student generation has to change before transit becomes a choice and car ownership becomes less important.
- Park and Ride facilities (free) to allow remote residents to travel by car to get to a transit transfer point.
- Ride matching service to accommodate van- and car-pools, especially in remote areas.
- If buses are used, they must be low floor design.
- Attendees were receptive to the provision of service to remote areas even if it was once a week.
- Recognizing the high cost of Conventional Transit service, attendees were receptive to using any vehicle type as long as they can get from A to B.

**Other:**
- Seamless travel that allows free transfers between a County funded service and Red Deer Transit is supported.
- It was recognized that transit cannot be all things to all people.
- There was a general understanding that the growth in transit use will take time and that a five-year plan that has increased expenditures from year to year is likely.
- Service must be both convenient and reliable.

### 3.2 Summary of the Transit Focus Group Discussions

The need for a publicly funded transportation service was clearly expressed. The benefits cited ranged from access to employment and attracting employees to enabling Red Deer County residents to access essential services in Red Deer City (health, recreation, shopping, cultural, social and other activities) eliminating the need to move into the City. There was also agreement that the lack of affordable transportation service obliges some County residents to own and operate several vehicles. Some businesses absorb costs to transport employees to and from their businesses.

Fiscal responsibility was also a concern and as such, the extension of seamless Red Deer Transit service, considered to be highly efficient based on the peer review results, in combination with low-cost forms of service delivery should be explored.
4. **SURVEYS RESULTS**

After receiving feedback from the various Stakeholders through the TFGs, a community-wide survey was developed and conducted by the consultant team to assess potential transit demand, identify key origins and destinations, and to gather opinions from both the residents and businesses in the County.

In order to gather feedback from as large a segment of the population as possible, the consultant team undertook a web-based survey. This was done to complement consultations with the Transit Focus Groups.

4.1 **Purpose**

The purpose of the data collection was to help obtain a community perspective to assist the Project Team in determining the level of interest and community need for transit service.

4.2 **Methodology**

The survey questionnaire was developed by iTRANS with input from the County Study Project Manager.

The web-based survey was advertised and available on the County’s website from July 23 to October 18, 2007. For those that did not have internet access during the survey period, hard copies of the surveys were made available by the County.

4.3 **Survey Results**

In total, there were 69 resident responses to the Public Survey. The survey questionnaire is illustrated in Appendix A and the highlights of the findings are summarized below.

Of those who responded to the survey, residents from Divisions 1, 2 and the Hamlet of Springbrook comprised almost three quarters of the total respondents (73%) with residents from Division 2 contributing the largest number of responses for any single area of residence (35%). More than three quarters of the surveys were completed by women (77%) while almost half of the total respondents (44%) were between the ages of 45 and 65 years of age.

Ideally, the survey should have captured a greater number of responses from students as they normally constitute a large proportion of transit customers but of the responses received, only 7% were from persons 25 and younger; the survey data further showed that only 3% of the respondents are students.
The key observations derived from the surveys are:

- The large majority of respondents have a driver’s licence (88%); 96% have at least 1 vehicle in the house and about 91% of total respondents had access to travel. Seven out of every ten persons (69%) who had access to a vehicle drove every day while another 8% only used their cars on work days. The rest of the respondents only used their vehicles whenever they were available.

- 75% of respondents stated that they did not consider the lack of transit to be a contributing factor in their ability to travel more often. Fewer than one in every ten respondents have physical, sensory or cognitive impairments—only 7% of all respondents deemed themselves eligible to use Specialized Transit.

- About half of all respondents indicated that their place of employment is in Red Deer City. Only 6% indicated that they work in Gasoline Alley with the remainder stating that they worked elsewhere.

- About 80% of the respondents drove themselves to work while another 9% were driven to their workplace.

- About one in every four persons surveyed (23%) stated that they had a gross annual income of $60,000 or more; in comparison, Statistics Canada has found that the average annual income of households with dual income earners in 2000 was $67,785 while the average annual income of households with single income earners for the same time period was $45,701\(^1\). As a side note, about a quarter of all respondents stated that they live alone (24%) while another 40% share their household with another individual.

- About 60% of all respondents who completed the survey provided additional comments related to the transit services and this study. 80% of the comments received indicated that the respondent viewed the transit services review to be positive and that they were supportive of efforts to provide transit services in the community.

From the findings of the web-based survey, it appears that the large majority of the respondents have higher than average incomes, have easy access to at least one or more vehicles in the home and tend to rely on the use of the automobile for their transportation needs. While they were largely supportive of any efforts to improve transit services, it is clear that the web survey responses will have to be viewed alongside Stakeholder consultations undertaken as part of this study. This is to ensure that the views and data provided are representative of the community as a whole, given there is currently no publicly funded transportation service available in the County.

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\(^1\) 2001 Census data available from [www.statcan.ca](http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/highlight/Income/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo=CSD&View=1a&Code=0&Table=1a&StartRec=493&Sort=2&B1=Family1&B2=Spouse1)
4.4 **Need for Rural Transit Services**

In summary, the Stakeholder consultations and survey identified the need for affordable rural public transportation service to:

- Enable elderly and frail people to continue to live in the County after they cannot or choose not to drive and to prevent the flight of this population group (including affluent seniors) from the County due to lack of services.
- Support Aging at Home objectives and policies, which aim to keep older County residents in their own homes for as long as possible.
- Forestall the break-up and distress of elderly couples when one spouse is admitted to long term care, and the other has no means of transportation to visit and care for him or her.
- Enhance the attractiveness of Red Deer County as a retirement destination, where there are mobility options to ensure access to essential services (such as medical care), as well as desirable activities (the arts, recreation, library, social occasions).
- Enable low-income families to take advantage of lower property values and rents in the County, by enabling them to access public transportation, bearing in mind that a family of four living at the poverty line in the County is still spending about $27,000 annually, most of it near where they reside.

While the aforementioned needs clearly address rural community quality of life issues, there is also the need to accommodate businesses and employees in the Gasoline Alley area, which attracts residents from Red Deer City. Both groups are addressed in this study.
5. **AVAILABLE TRANSIT SERVICES**

While the Transit Focus Group discussions addressed community-wide needs, iTRANS reviewed services that exist today, publicly funded and volunteer services.

5.1 **Red Deer Transit**

The nearest Conventional Transit service is provided by Red Deer Transit. In this regard, Red Deer City is favourably disposed to cooperating with Red Deer County in a joint program to improve the mobility of County residents by providing some transit / Specialized Transit service in Red Deer County. Cooperating with Red Deer Transit and Red Deer Transit Action Bus would provide the advantages of professional-quality vehicles, drivers, planning, maintenance, and customer service at a fraction of the cost, and none of the risks, of attempting to start a dedicated County service.

5.2 **Red Deer Transit Action Bus**

The only tax supported Specialized Transit service available to the County is currently provided by Red Deer Transit Action Bus, herein referred to as Action Bus, which was formerly called Citizens Action Bus. Since Red Deer County residents do not support the service through tax dollars, County residents must pay the full cost recovery when using Action Bus. This is prohibitive at approximately $50 per hour.

The cost of the Specialized Transit service per customer is far greater than regular Conventional Transit. On the other hand, its vehicles only operate when a trip is requested. This avoids having empty vehicles circulating at times when demand is low or nil. As the population ages, there will be significant increases in demand. The Action Bus service is subsidized by Red Deer City for resident travel within the City boundaries. The fare is $3.00.

If Red Deer County residents use Action Bus, the approximate $50 cost per hour becomes cost-prohibitive for the more distant residents of Red Deer County. This has resulted in the need for travel alternatives provided by volunteers and volunteer agencies.

5.3 **Volunteer Transportation Services**

Many services only transport people who satisfy eligibility criteria, such as the use of a wheelchair or other mobility aid, or have a cognitive disability (Down Syndrome, Alzheimer’s, etc.). Some Specialized Transit agencies allow non-disabled passengers to ride on a space-available basis. Others have liberal eligibility and allow virtually anyone who wishes to use the service, whether they are disabled or not. Having the service available to everyone helps to justify the cost of providing it, and avoids the need to administer the process of qualifying passengers for eligibility, saving a significant amount of effort and cost.

Typically, various organizations provide Specialized transportation for their clients such as community living centres, education institutions and nursing homes, which depend on volunteers and donations to provide the service. To keep costs to a minimum, it is of paramount importance that low cost volunteer services be maintained to the extent possible.
The following is a summary of five County volunteer agencies and their characteristics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Vehicle Descriptions(s)</th>
<th>Service Overview</th>
<th>Driver Compensation</th>
<th>Cost to Client</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delburne Elks</td>
<td>15 passenger GMC Savana van.</td>
<td>Two regular trips per month to Red Deer.</td>
<td>Vehicles driven by members of the Delburne Elks.</td>
<td>$3 for trips to sight seeing destinations (aka. Meal trips).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No capacity for W/C passengers.</td>
<td>Approx. eight other trips to sight seeing locations per month.</td>
<td>No driver compensation other than $15 per diem for meals.</td>
<td>$5 per user per trip for trips to Red Deer; or $40 / year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$0.45 / km for other rental trips.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elnora Legion</td>
<td>14 passenger van.</td>
<td>One regular trip per month to Red Deer.</td>
<td>Vehicles driven by volunteer pool.</td>
<td>$5 per trip regardless of number of passengers. $0.40 / km for rental trips.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No capacity for W/C passenger.</td>
<td>Approx. three other rental trips per month.</td>
<td>No driver compensation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of Penhold</td>
<td>24 passenger mini-bus.</td>
<td>No regular monthly trips.</td>
<td>Drivers hired from a pool at $13 / hr.</td>
<td>$25 + fuel fixed fee for trips to Red Deer or Innisfail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No capacity for W/C passengers.</td>
<td>Approx. three rental trips per month.</td>
<td>Renter can opt to drive if qualified.</td>
<td>$0.40 / km for other rental uses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Trips usually to Red Deer or Innisfail.</td>
<td>Other pay arrangements are negotiable.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylvan Lake Senior Citizens Bus Association</td>
<td>24 passenger mini-bus.</td>
<td>Regular weekly route to Red Deer and two local malls.</td>
<td>Vehicle driven by volunteers.</td>
<td>$5 per trip for regular route.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No capacity for W/C passengers.</td>
<td>Approx. three other trips per month to special events.</td>
<td>No driver compensation other than per diems: Lunch = $15, lunch + dinner = $25, all day = $30.</td>
<td>$10 for long distance trips such as to Calgary or Edmonton.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Service for age 55+ and disabled persons only.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innisfail Legion</td>
<td>Handy-van w / capacity for two W/C and six reg. passengers (fixed).</td>
<td>Handy-van used very frequently (on the road everyday).</td>
<td>Drivers hired from a pool at $15.</td>
<td>Handy-van costs $0.45 / km out of town use, $3 / trip for in-town use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>47 passenger 1984 MCI Bus w / no capacity for W/C passengers.</td>
<td>MCI bus used four times / week on average (busier during hockey season).</td>
<td></td>
<td>MCI Bus costs $1.20 / km for local groups, $1.35 / km for out-of-town groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another service available, Driving Miss Daisy, is a privately operated, attendant care form of transportation. Volunteer drivers also serve a need and are reimbursed for their travel expense (kilometre-based) and, in some cases, for their time. If a County resident uses the Driving Miss Daisy service, the $20 per hour cost is considered prohibitive to many especially those that live in the more remote areas of the County. While this hourly cost may not be affordable to low-income residents, it is nevertheless a very reasonable cost when compared to some of the non-volunteer services such as Action Bus.

The following is a summary of the volunteer services provided and related research:

- Volunteer driving services are the lowest-based costs of all services and as such, should be encouraged to the extent possible. Although reimbursed for their mileage, the amount paid may not be enough to cover expenses based on Canadian Automobile Association (CAA) statistics. The official CAA figures for the cost of car ownership and operation for 2007 is $0.49 per km. There would be added incentive for volunteers if the mileage reimbursement rates (typically $0.20 – $0.35 per km) were increased to the full CAA figure. Alternatively, the volunteer driver could be issued tax receipts for the difference between the two rates, which could aid in recruiting and retaining volunteer drivers.

- As the volunteer force decreases and the cost of fuel, maintenance and insurance increases, it can be a burden to the individuals or agencies that own and operate vehicles. As a result, vehicles can become under-utilized. It may, therefore, be more effective to convince the donating agencies to provide the equivalent cost of a vehicle in the form of a grant dedicated to providing service operated, perhaps, by a third party funded by the County. The concept of pooling resources, including financial, could be explored by undertaking an inventory and opening up lines of communication to coordinate all community resources. This “one-stop-shopping” concept should be pursued in the future.

- An option to enhancing volunteer driving services is to supply accessible vehicles to agencies that can provide volunteers to transport people who travel with a mobility aid.

Volunteer services play a critical role in the rural areas of the County. Whatever solution is provided should be complementary to the volunteer services rather than compete with them.

### 5.4 Preliminary Transit Markets

Following a review of the Stakeholder consultations and the assessment of the existing services available or offered to County residents, it was agreed by County staff that there were two distinct markets:

1. **Gasoline Alley and Springbrook**: These areas are in close proximity to Red Deer City and should be served with fixed route transit services.

2. **Remote County Areas**: It would be cost prohibitive to serve other areas of the County with daily fixed route services and as such, reduced service levels and alternative forms of low-cost service delivery complements volunteer services should be considered.

To guide the decision-making process for a public transportation start-up strategy, a policy framework is needed.
6. **POLICY FRAMEWORK**

Based on the web-based community survey and Stakeholder feedback, iTRANS developed a set of policies to guide the decision-making process with respect to the level of service provided and land use design guidelines that reflect the needs of transit.

The policies were designed to reflect a balance between meeting public transportation needs and ensuring affordability for each service; that is, it should be clear that public transportation cannot be all things to all people and that what will be provided is based on priorities that reflect overall objectives and fiscal responsibility.

To this end, the policy framework addresses:
- Service policies (hours of service, days of operation, event-driven schedules, etc.).
- Performance measures and service efficiency / effectiveness.
- Land use design guidelines for future subdivisions

The policies document was supported by the County Project Manager as a document to be used for development of the initial service concept options.

6.1 **Transit Goals and Objectives**

Transit goals and objectives provide a general policy direction for Red Deer County to follow with respect to the provision of transit service.

Transit service standards are needed to guide the County in determining if or when transit service will be provided, how often it will be provided and how it will be provided through:
- A framework for making rational decisions on the level and quality of service in the community.
- Increased public awareness of the philosophy of service and growth.
- A strong commitment by Council to maintain service standards within the context of balancing social and environmental objectives with fiscal responsibility.
- A high degree of acceptance for transit expenditures since the decision-making process will be perceived as fair.

Through the community surveys and analysis and the consensus-building process advocated throughout the study, a number of goals and objectives have been developed to guide decision-making.
**Service Goals:**
To provide a public transit service as a viable alternative to the automobile in Red Deer County:
- Improve the quality of life of residents who do not have access to an automobile.
- Meet the travel demand generated by various target markets in the employment academic, commercial, medical, and service industries.
- Recognize that transit is an integral component of urban growth.

**Performance Goals:**
Conventional Transit performance targets have been established for the next five years:
- **Effectiveness:** To increase transit use to peer group median value of 3.7 passengers per capita within three to five years.
- **Efficiency:** To increase service utilization to 50% of the Red Deer Transit passengers per hour of service within five years.
- **Financial:** To increase the revenue to cost (R/C) ratio of Red Deer County transit services within five years from 10 to 30%.

The performance targets identified can be adjusted, as required, and are designed to be slightly out of reach to ensure ridership growth initiatives are balanced with fiscal responsibility.

**Service Area Objective:**
Red Deer County should provide service to meet resident and business needs to and from Red Deer City and within Red Deer County.

**Service Objective:**
The minimum frequency of service and service hours to be provided shall be adequate to meet the various target markets within the community.

### 6.2 Land Use Design Guidelines for Residential Development

The efficiency and effectiveness of public transportation (Conventional and Specialized) is dictated by the degree to which land use design guidelines support transit operations and sustainable development initiatives. By applying proven transit supportive land use design guidelines, Red Deer County, or more specifically, the hamlets within the County, will be able to avoid the costly mistakes of other larger municipalities.

The guidelines address:
- Acceptable walk distances from developments to existing and future transit services.
- Accessibility infrastructure.
- What streets buses should travel on.
- Incorporating transit-supportive guidelines in the development approval process.
Highlights of the guidelines are:

- **Bus Stop Locations:**
  - That the location of bus stops be co-coordinated with the design of walkways, intersections and development in order to minimize walk distances and provide for reasonable bus stop spacing.

- **Walk Distances:**
  - 90% of all dwelling units should be within a 400 metre walk distance of an existing or future bus stop with 66% of the dwelling units within a 300 metre walk distance of the bus stop.
  - All multiple dwelling units should be within a 300 metre walk distance of an existing or future bus stop.
  - Estate-type residential developments should be excluded from meeting walk distance guidelines and as such, transit service should not be expected.

- **Walkway Locations:**
  - That walkways be provided such that walk distances from the residences of a subdivision to existing or future transit routes are minimized.

- **Acceptable Transit Routes:**
  - Transit routes can be provided on arterial roads and major collectors which have reasonable through access, not on crescents or cul-de-sacs. A nine metre pavement width is the minimum acceptable for transit routes.
  - Major ‘through’ roads should be spaced no more than 900 metres apart to allow adequate transit route coverage of future residential developments.
  - Provision should be made to minimize the length of one-way transit loops. One directional loops longer than two kilometres are unacceptable.
  - Provision for temporary transit vehicle turning circles must be provided, where necessary, to allow transit route phasing to coincide with development phasing. A minimum 15.2 metre radius is required for the turning circle.

- **Transit Route Length:**
  - Road layouts in residential developments should be designed such that transit routes require a maximum of one kilometre of transit route per 1,000 residents served.

- **Trade-Offs**
  - That land use / transit co-ordination is a necessary and valuable goal recognizing that, in the implementation of the design objectives, trade-offs may exist in some instances with other planning, engineering and environmental considerations.
  - That all land use plans recommended by staff shall reflect efforts used in trying to achieve the transit guideline objectives.
7. SERVICE DESIGN CONCEPTS

iTRANS developed a series of service options and concepts that were assessed for implementation for Red Deer County. Each option was assessed based on order-of-magnitude costs and appropriateness for the market being served.

Service options examined include:
- Fixed route Conventional Transit bus services
- Fixed route shared-ride taxis
- Car- and van-pool options
- Demand responsive dial-a-ride buses
- Community buses
- Peak period shuttle services

7.1 Conventional Transit Service

Conventional Transit is the most common public transportation service operated in towns and cities where buses operate along a fixed route that follows a public timetable. Service is generally provided along main roadways where key destinations are located. Routes tend to be as direct as possible to minimize travel time and, therefore, be more competitive with the automobile for the work and school trip. Buses are generally heavy-duty in design and range in size from 9.2 to 18.3 metre articulated buses but the most common is a 12.2 metre (40-foot) bus.

Since the early 1990’s, most new transit buses are of the low-floor design. By eliminating interior steps in the doorways, low floor buses makes access easier and faster for all passengers, reduce passenger tripping and falling accidents, and eliminates he need for a lift for the boarding and alighting and wheelchair and scooter passengers.

In summary, Conventional Transit Service has the following characteristics:
- Wheelchair accessible buses.
- Fixed routes and schedules are reliable.
- Service tends to be more frequent during the peak periods.
- Designed for peak passenger loads to accommodate the work and school trip and are able to accommodate typical off-peak service with less frequent service for other trip purposes such as shopping, leisure, medical, and personal business.
7.2 Community Bus Service

Community bus service is a form of fixed route service that is a sub-type of Conventional Transit, which is adapted to address the travel and mobility needs of senior citizens. Community bus routes are laid to link major sources and destinations of trips by seniors, such as senior’s residences, shopping centres, recreational facilities and medical buildings. Unlike Conventional Transit, community bus routes frequently use side streets and small arterials, and locate stops as close as possible to building entrances so as to minimize walking distances for passengers.

The driver is trained to provide boarding and alighting assistance to passengers, and has the time to do so because the scheduled speed of the community bus route is slower than for a Conventional Transit route. Interior seating is often configured in rows, rather than around the perimeter of the vehicle, which makes it easier for people to have conversations and socialize. Having the seats close together also provides more hand holds when moving down the aisle.

Routes are generally indirect, with longer average travel times, as is appropriate to a passenger market for whom directness of travel and frequency of service are not as important as ease of access, minimized walking and the availability of driver assistance. Community buses usually permit passengers to request to be let off between stops, and allow passengers to hail the bus and get on board at any safe location along the route. Service frequencies tend to be less than Conventional Transit, typically provided on an hourly basis or even every two hours. Community buses usually operate at off-peak periods, and sometimes replace a Conventional Transit route during that time. A smaller Conventional Transit vehicle can be used as a community bus to save on capital costs.

7.3 Demand-Responsive Dial-a-Ride Buses

Dial-a-Ride Service is a demand-responsive door-to-door service whereby residents call into a dispatch centre to request service. A van or small bus is then sent to pick them up. Service can be completely in response to requests, or can be structured to operate on a frequency basis (e.g. every hour). In that case, the requester is given the next available time the vehicle can arrive to pick him or her up, and an approximate arrival time at destination. Similar to a fixed route shared ride taxi, a dial-a-bus customer would be able to transfer to a Conventional Transit route, if necessary, to complete a long trip. On the return trip, the process is the same, the customer is also required to call the dispatch and request the trip.

Dial-a-Ride Service is generally used in place of Conventional Transit in areas where population is sparse and demand for service is low. The need to request each trip and wait for the next available time can make it less convenient for the customer; however, this is offset by the convenience of door-to-door service, especially during inclement weather.
Dial-a-ride may either compete directly with the taxi industry or be offered using taxi vehicles. Costs per passenger can be significantly higher than other low-cost services.

### 7.4 Fixed Route Shared-Ride Taxi Service

Fixed Route Shared-Taxi service is also generally employed in areas of low demand, that is, where Conventional Transit service is not warranted. The taxi, usually a van, follows a fixed route and schedule and stops only at designated points or bus stops. Passengers board the taxi vehicle, pay the normal transit fare and can be issued transfers, if requested. In essence, a taxi is used in place of a bus. The significant benefit is that the cost of service is typically much lower than that of Conventional Transit. Typical contracts set an hourly rate, and stipulate that only the time actually used is paid for. Shared ride taxis are used in conjunction with Conventional Transit fixed routes as an interim solution until Conventional service is warranted. No dedicated dispatch service is required for this option.

Since taxis would not offer a door-to-door service, shared-ride taxi is not viewed as competing with regular taxis.

### 7.5 Car- and Van-Pool Options

Car- and Van-Pool services are effective where a significant number of people in one area need transportation to another area, such as a commercial, business or industrial area. Pooling requires matching people with similar start and end work times in close proximity to each other. Given the sparse population density of Red Deer County, this option would have success only in identified pockets of high demand. Further, the rural nature of the community lends itself to car- and van-pools that are organized informally. The option was not considered further.

### 7.6 Peak Period Shuttle Services

The ability to address people’s needs to get to and from work is of paramount importance. In most cities across Canada, large and small, service to employment areas is given priority; special shuttle service is offered to match employment hours. Since most work hours begin in the morning and end in the late afternoon, transit systems will provide shuttle service to accommodate shift start and end times. During the mid-day period (e.g. 9am – 3pm), no service is provided. Peak period shuttles, also known as ‘industrial specials’, are often used to provide service from a Conventional Transit transfer point so that transit customers can complete their trip to work. The vehicles used are typically Conventional Transit buses.
7.7 **Comparison of Service Delivery Concepts**

The service delivery concepts evaluated include:
- Fixed Route Conventional Transit Service
- Community Bus Service
- Fixed Route Shared-Ride Taxi Service
- Dial-a-Ride Bus Service
- Peak Period Shuttles

**Table 3: Service Options Comparison**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Type and Description</th>
<th>Vehicle Options</th>
<th>Relative Operating Cost</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conventional Transit all day fixed route service</td>
<td>Heavy duty buses (e.g. Red Deer Transit)</td>
<td>Highest</td>
<td>Most expensive to purchase and operate. Hourly peak service becoming limits accommodation of work trip.</td>
<td>Highest capacity. Mobility aid accessible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventional Transit Peak Hour trips</td>
<td>Heavy duty buses (e.g. Red Deer Transit)</td>
<td>Mid</td>
<td>Minimal service during peak hour.</td>
<td>Ability to start small then add trips as demand dictates (flexible).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Bus</td>
<td>Heavy duty buses (e.g. Red Deer Transit)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Does not meet work trip needs. Infrequent service.</td>
<td>Serves more origins and destinations. Mobility aid accessible. Can be incorporated into Red Deer Transit fleet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dial-a-ride service operated by County or Taxi Company (usually connects with Transit)</td>
<td>Heavy duty bus or van</td>
<td>Mid to high – depends on vehicle option</td>
<td>Customer must call in. Dispatcher required. Vehicle must be available (full hourly rate applies). Longer wait times for customer. Indirect routes.</td>
<td>Applicable to more remote areas. Flexible hours of operation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed Route shared-ride taxi</td>
<td>Sedan, Large Van or Small Bus</td>
<td>Lowest</td>
<td>Minimal capacity – limited to off-peak or peak feeder services.</td>
<td>Feeder service for remote areas. Costs apply to portion of hourly cost. Ideal for new residential areas or feeder services. Low cost for added late evening trips.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.8 Conclusion

The concepts were discussed with Red Deer County and Red Deer Transit staff and the following was determined:

- Conventional Transit bus service should be provided when serving Gasoline Alley during the peak periods, while low cost forms of service delivery could be considered during off peak times such as the evening period.
- Only non-Conventional Transit modes would be appropriate for the more rural areas.
8. GASOLINE ALLEY AND SPRINGBROOK

There are a number of service delivery options to be considered but first and foremost is the need for a fixed route transit service between Red Deer City and Gasoline Alley and, if possible, to the developing area of Springbrook. The Conventional Transit service would be the backbone of the service offered, which can be complemented by other service types.

8.1 Fixed Route Concepts

Ideally, half-hour fixed route transit service should be provided as a minimum in mature urban areas; however, it would be prudent to start off with less frequent service and increase the service level as demand warrants or additional funds, external or County taxpayer-based, become available.

iTRANS developed two route concepts that met the following criteria:

- One bus would be needed.
- A one-hour round trip could be provided as a minimum.
- Red Deer County route would terminate at Bower Mall.
- Service would be provided to Gasoline Alley and Springbrook.
- The service would attract Red Deer City residents to board and alight buses within Red Deer City and to travel to Red Deer County (e.g. Gasoline Alley), thereby encouraging Red Deer City to share in the service costs.
- Proper route design principles are applied.

iTRANS, with the assistance of Red Deer County and Red Deer Transit staff, reviewed several route concepts and narrowed it down to two options as illustrated in Exhibit 13 and
Exhibit 14.

Exhibit 13: Option A – Gasoline Alley / Springbrook
Exhibit 14: Option B – Gasoline Alley
8.1.1 Route Option A – Gasoline Alley / Springbrook

Highlights of Route Option A are:

- In the morning, service would be provided between Bower Mall and Springbrook via Gasoline Alley:
  - Springbrook residents would have direct service to Red Deer Transit buses at Bower Mall but can remain on bus if destined to Gasoline Alley.
  - Red Deer residents will have direct access to Gasoline Alley.
- In the afternoon, buses would travel in the opposite direction (Springbrook to Bower Mall via Gasoline Alley):
  - Springbrook residents would have direct service to Springbrook from Bower Mall.
  - Gasoline Alley customers and employees would have direct service to Bower Mall.
- During the off-peak, service can be provided:
  - Every 45 minutes between Bower Mall and Gasoline Alley.
  - Optional every 60 minutes between Bower Mall and Gasoline Alley with additional coverage in Red Deer City near Bower Mall.

8.1.2 Route Option B – Gasoline Alley

Highlights of Route Option B are:

- Provides direct service between Bower Mall and Gasoline Alley.
- Two-way service provided along the route for the most part.
- Round trip distance of 17 km, requiring one bus.
  - Service can be provided every 45 minutes at 22.7 kph.
  - Service can be provided every 60 minutes at 17 kph.
- Service can be extended, if warranted, within the one hour roundtrip time (e.g. to Red Deer College or the Bower residential area of Red Deer.

8.1.3 Remote Rural Communities

The provision of Conventional service to less accessible or remote areas within Red Deer County is, no doubt, possible; however, they would be relatively cost-prohibitive if additional vehicles were required. Alternatively, the one bus route solution could be deviated to provide more residents with access; however, this would degrade the level of service. The approach taken was to provide minimum quality service at 60 minute frequencies to start then expand as demand dictates.

At the informal workshop held with members of County Council on February 26, 2008, the community of Waskasoo Estates and the Town Penhold were identified as examples of areas not covered by Route Options A and B.

Wasksasoo Estates has a population approximating 500 and consists of mobile homes – a likely good transit market – adjacent to Highway 2A where the proposed route would travel. If the proposed route were diverted into this area, it would inconvenience transit customers and reduce the frequency of service.
There are two suggestions to address service to the Waskasoo Estates area:

1. **Provide a bus stop and walkway access to the proposed Conventional Transit route on Highway 2A:** This would at least enable residents to access transit even though walk distances would not be reasonable for many of the residents. Also, Highway 2A would have to be crossed to access the bus in the morning.

2. **Provide fixed route taxi service to Bower Mall:** This would at least enable residents to transfer to other transit services at Bower Mall.

It was agreed that extending the Conventional Transit bus route to Penhold would not be feasible. The Town of Penhold could, however, assess the viability of introducing fixed route taxi service to deliver residents to, for example, the end point of the proposed route in Springbrook where residents could transfer. The transfers would be free, similar to the proposed arrangement with Red Deer Transit. This approach could be applied elsewhere within the County, if desired and if funds were available.

### 8.1.4 Summary of Route Options

For the purpose of this study, the route concepts meet resident needs and provide a basis for order-of-magnitude costing purposes. The final route configuration can change, provided bus travel speeds are within acceptable limits and proper route design principles are maintained. In this regard, it is better to have less coverage with direct or reliable service than more coverage with less direct or reliable service.

### 8.2 Proposed Conventional Transit Service

Upon assessing current transit operations, conducting a peer review of transit service in similar sized towns and cities, analyzing the web-based survey results, and assembling Transit Focus Group input, iTRANS assessed the following transit service delivery options:

- Conventional Transit
- Fixed Route Shared Ride Taxis
- Combination of Service Options:
  - Conventional Transit (Peak)
  - Fixed Route Shared Ride Taxi (Off-peak)

The purpose of presenting a variety of service options was to present to the public a range of service and route concepts using order-of-magnitude costing. They are presented as a guide only. In this regard, it should be understood that final routes, the hours and days of service, and the method of service delivery will likely vary based on the level of funding, if any, that would be provided by the respective towns and whether or not external sustained funding (e.g. Provincial or Federal government) would be provided as well.
It is also important to note that throughout the costing exercise, it has been assumed that all costs attributed to Red Deer County buses travelling within Red Deer City would be borne 100% by the County. If the service were shared between the City and County based on vehicle kilometres travelled within each jurisdiction, as is the case in other cross-boundary transit services in Canada, the net cost of service would be less for the County. In this regard, a detailed review of an integrated service with Red Deer Transit service would need to be undertaken. The net costs presented in this report would, therefore, be reduced if an appropriate agreement between both parties was reached.

8.3 Five-Year Conventional Transit Service Plan

There are three markets that will benefit from public transportation to Red Deer County that are being considered, which are described as follows:

1. Trips originating in Red Deer City destined to Red Deer County (i.e. Gasoline Alley).
2. Trips originating in Red Deer County destined to Red Deer City.
3. Trips originating and ending in Red Deer County.

To serve the markets identified, the services being considered for this study are fixed route transit services for the Gasoline Alley and Springbrook areas while demand responsive and accessible service is recommended for the rural areas outside of Gasoline Alley and Springbrook with the exception of Specialized Transit, which would also serve Springbrook.

There will be an immediate demand for service, particularly for the Red Deer City to Gasoline Alley market; however, it will take a few years for the market to change existing travel habits and embrace public transit as a viable alternative.

8.3.1 Revenue and Cost Assumptions

In an effort to estimate demand, revenue and costs, a number of assumptions have been made and the rationale that was used to support them. Since the service provided will represent a new expenditure, it will be important to be conservative when estimating ridership revenue and the cost to provide the service.

As a basis to determine service levels, the median investment of $13.05 per capita was reported in the peer review for municipalities in the 12,000 to 30,000 population range. It is interesting to note that the median population reported is 18,689 and is equivalent to the 2006 Red Deer County population. When extrapolated, the County deficit for Conventional Transit would approximate $244,000 (i.e. 18,689 residents x $13.05 per capita). The deficit is the total cost less revenues and excludes capital costs and external funding.
8.3.2 Five-Year Conventional Transit Service Plan

The Conventional Transit servicing Bower Mall, Gasoline Alley and Springbrook is designed to accommodate the work trip on weekdays (6:00am-9:00am and 3:00pm-6:00pm). The off-peak service (all other times and days service is provided) is designed to accommodate all trip purposes between Red Deer City and Gasoline Alley.

The service levels will be reviewed annually and are subject to adjustment based on demand and public input. For example, if the demand for evening service does not require a transit vehicle, alternative forms of service delivery such as fixed route shared-ride taxi could be implemented.

The proposed hours of operation for the conventional Transit service provided by Red Deer Transit are summarized as follows.

**Service Level 1 (2009-2011):**
Weekdays:
- Monday – Wednesday: 6:00am - 7:00pm
- Thursday - Friday: 6:00am – 11:00pm
- Saturday: 7:00am – 11:00pm
- Sundays: No Service
- Holidays: No Service

**Service Level 2 (2012-2013):**
Weekdays:
- Monday – Friday: 6:00am – 11:00pm
- Saturday: 7:00am – 11:00pm
- Sundays: 9:00am – 7:00pm
- Holidays: No Service

8.3.3 Five-Year Conventional Transit Financial Plan

The following assumptions were made to develop the five-year financial plan estimates:
- Conventional Transit service cost would be $70 per hour.
- Ridership will be 8 passengers per hour of service - about 1/3 the Red Deer Transit hourly demand in Year 1 and grow to attain the level of 12 passengers per hour within three years and 16 passengers per hour by the fifth year.
- The fare will be $2.00 for all passengers.

Exhibit 15 provides a summary of the net cost per capita based on the projected population over the next five years, which has been assumed to be constant for conservative budgeting purposes.
Exhibit 15: 2009-2013 Fixed Route Transit Financial Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fixed Route Transit Costs and Revenues</th>
<th>2009 Service Level 1</th>
<th>2010 Service Level 1</th>
<th>2011 Service Level 1</th>
<th>2012 Service Level 2</th>
<th>2013 Service Level 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>18,639</td>
<td>18,639</td>
<td>18,639</td>
<td>18,639</td>
<td>18,639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue Hours</td>
<td>5,314</td>
<td>5,314</td>
<td>5,314</td>
<td>5,602</td>
<td>5,602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Operating Cost</td>
<td>$371,980</td>
<td>$371,980</td>
<td>$371,980</td>
<td>$392,140</td>
<td>$392,140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Passenger Ridership</td>
<td>42,512</td>
<td>53,140</td>
<td>63,768</td>
<td>78,428</td>
<td>89,632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Passenger Revenue</td>
<td>$85,024</td>
<td>$106,280</td>
<td>$127,536</td>
<td>$156,856</td>
<td>$179,264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Net Cost</td>
<td>$286,956</td>
<td>$265,700</td>
<td>$244,444</td>
<td>$235,284</td>
<td>$212,876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Cost per Capita</td>
<td>$15.40</td>
<td>$14.26</td>
<td>$13.11</td>
<td>$12.62</td>
<td>$11.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The aforementioned service levels are provided for budgeting purposes only. Actual hours of operation could vary based on system-wide scheduling to accommodate timed transfers at Bower Mall, shift times for employees in Gasoline Alley and other considerations such as theatre times. The service can be increased earlier or remain static depending upon service efficiency measured as passengers per hour. Further, if demand warrants, limited Sunday service could be provided using either Conventional Transit or fixed route shared-ride taxis.
9. RURAL TRANSIT

Given the rural nature of Red Deer County, the low population density and large service area, with the exception of certain areas such as Springbrook and Gasoline Alley, it is difficult to justify a regular fixed route daily bus service. Nonetheless, there is the need for some form of public transportation to address the needs of county residents who cannot drive due to physical or cognitive disabilities or who do not have access to a car.

The size of the County in relation to the City is clearly illustrated in Exhibit 17 below.

Exhibit 16: Township Grid

9.1 Zone-Based Service Strategy

The most critical need in rural areas of Red Deer County is to provide mobility for people who are physically unable to drive and need to access medical facilities and other services in Red Deer City and Red Deer County, which is essential to their health and well-being.

Based on Stakeholder consultations, Red Deer County residents expressed interest in addressing the needs of mobility-disadvantaged people, seniors, people with disabilities, medical patients, and other county residents without access to reliable transportation. Experience in other communities like Red Deer County suggests that a Specialized Transit service intended for elders and people with disabilities should also be available to non-disabled people who wish to use it.
As mentioned earlier, rural fixed route public transit service is cost-prohibitive in most parts of the County except Gasoline Alley and Springbrook, because population density and commercial intensity are too low to generate adequate ridership. A range of alternative transportation options exists; each with its own strengths and limitations. Several of these can play a part in a comprehensive, ‘Family of Services’ mobility plan for Red Deer County that would match the appropriate vehicle and service with the needs identified.

In the large rural area of Prince Edward County, Ontario, Specialized Transit service is provided by the neighbouring municipality service provider, Quinte Access, on a cost-recovery basis. Service is provided three days per week, one day for each of three county zones. It requires clients to book their rides in advance. There are two levels of eligibility. Residents with a physical disability are given priority. Others are allowed to use the service, space permitting. This strategy can be applied to Red Deer County.

Since service would be limited, health care practitioners and institutions must be encouraged to adopt the practice of ‘block-booking’ medical appointments by region of the County, so that county residents from the same region can share public or private transportation to get to and from their appointments. For days when service is not available, volunteers can continue to play an important role in providing transportation, as they do today.

### 9.2 Non-emergency Medical Travel

Red Deer County should enlist the support of the medical sector to provide transportation options for non-emergency medical patients whose condition is stable. These people often do not require an ambulance, but use one in the absence of other alternatives. Reducing unnecessary non-emergency use of ambulances will help to contain ambulance costs, improve ambulance response times, delay the need for additional ambulances and crews, and improve the promptness and reliability of non-emergency transfers. Non-emergency vehicles do not provide emergency coverage and are therefore never pre-empted from performing their scheduled transfers, as frequently happens with ambulances.

Red Deer County should approach Alberta Health with a proposal that Alberta Health provide financial assistance to reduce the cost of transportation for people who need to travel for medical purposes.

The County should refer to the following cost savings and cost-avoidance opportunities in these negotiations:

- The consolidation of health care services, in order to work effectively, requires that people in non-serviced areas have access to affordable transportation to and from the closest medical facilities. In the absence of transportation, people from remote areas generally have to be admitted sooner, retained longer, and discharged later from acute care facilities in order to ensure positive care outcomes. Patient transportation costs are modest compared to the costs of retaining a patient in the facility. In order to realize these savings, Alberta Health will have to contribute to making transportation readily available and affordable.
- Patients who have no other access to transportation have to use an ambulance even when an ambulance is not medically necessary. This imposes additional strains and costs on the ambulance service, increases the number of vehicles and crews required for emergency and stand-by coverage, degrades emergency response times, and frequently results in a variety of additional costs for the sending and receiving facilities when an ambulance either is not available for a patient transfer, or does not adhere to scheduled pick up and drop off times because it has been pre-empted for an emergency.

- The costs of missed appointments for diagnostic and therapeutic procedures due to transportation problems are borne by facilities and by the health care system as a whole. To this must be added the human and financial costs of adverse patient outcomes. While they may not be easily quantified, there is little doubt that these costs are substantial, as may be seen from the massive investment by the US government in Medicaid transportation, as well as the proliferation of dedicated transportation services at many private hospitals in the U.S., and the increasing use of commercial non-emergency patient transfer services in major centres such as Toronto and Calgary.

- As a municipal entity, the County can accept and issue receipts for contributions in kind that aid in the provision of municipal services. The tax deductions available to people who perform these services (including volunteer agency drivers, for whom the contribution recognized) would be the difference between their agency reimbursement rate and the Canadian Automobile Association true mileage cost of operating a private vehicle. Canada Customs and Revenue currently allows a maximum rate of $0.48 per kilometre of operating a private vehicle.

9.3 Encouragement of Volunteer Driving

Volunteer transportation plays a vital role in meeting the transportation needs of County residents, and provides a type of personalized and caring service that is not possible through professional services.

The County should explore all viable ways and means of encouraging volunteer drivers, including:
- Recognition by County Council for their community services.
- ‘Topping-up’ the mileage reimbursement rate volunteer drivers are paid by volunteer agencies, which is typically one half or less of the true cost of operating their vehicle.
- Determine what would be required for the County to issue tax receipts to volunteer drivers, including family members and friends who drive their loved ones on a regular basis for therapies and treatment. As a municipal corporation, the County can issue tax-deductible receipts for donations to approved municipal programs. The County’s Transportation Plan should include making tax deductions available to people who perform these services, including volunteer agency drivers, for whom the contribution recognized would be the difference between their agency reimbursement rate and the Canadian Automobile Association or Canada Customs and Revenue Agency allowable mileage amount (currently $0.48 per kilometre). This is a measure that would cost the County very little, and would ease the tax burden of people who are providing an important service, many of whom are of modest means and / or fixed incomes.
9.4 Rural Transit Service Concept

Due to the vast area outside of Gasoline Alley and Springbrook, iTRANS and Red Deer County staff determined that the County could be divided into four or five distinct areas. Each area would represent a zone that would receive transit service one day per week.

9.4.1 Service Delivery Options

For areas in close proximity to Red Deer City limits (e.g. a five or ten minute drive), Red Deer Transit Action Bus could provide the service, which would be tied into other trips scheduled on the vehicle.

For other areas, demand responsive service would be provided by the most cost-effective means that would meet the demand such as:

- Red Deer Transit Action Bus
- Taxi Van
- Volunteer Services
- Driving Miss Daisy

The key would be to have a single point of contact, which would be Red Deer Transit Action Bus or a third party that can provide the service using volunteer drivers. Reservations would be required at least 24 to 48 hours in advance for the remote areas to ensure the appropriate vehicle is assigned based on capacity and whether or not a wheelchair lift is needed.

9.4.2 Revenue and Cost Assumptions

As a basis to determine service levels, the median investment per capita was $4.62 for Specialized Transit in the peer review for municipalities in the 12,000 to 30,000 population range.

The following conservative assumptions have been made to estimate ridership revenues:

- An average hourly based cost of $45 has been used for estimating purposes, representing a $40 average cost per hour for the vehicle and driver plus a $5 per hour administration and dispatching cost.
- It has been assumed that 0.5% of the Red Deer County population will use Specialized Transit during the first two years, 1% in the following two years and 1.5% in the fifth year.
- Each registrant will take an average of 30 trips per year based on the median value of the peer group.
- The average fare for Specialized and Rural Transit will be an average of $6 in the first two years, ranging from $4 to $8 to make it affordable then increased to $7.50, ranging from $5 to $10 per one-way trip in subsequent years as service hours increase.
9.4.3 Five-Year Rural Transit Plan

Rural Transit services would be provided by wheelchair accessible vehicles, if required, providing service to all rural residents with those requiring Specialized Transit (i.e. wheelchair accessibility) given a priority while other residents would be allowed to use the service if room is available. This dual level eligibility strategy could evolve over time; however, it is suggested that those requiring wheelchair accessibility must reserve 48 hours in advance while others can book based on availability thereafter.

For budgeting purposes, service will be provided in four rural zones as follows:
1. Eight hours per zone per week in 2009.
2. Ten hours per zone per week in 2010.
3. 12 hours per zone per week in 2011.
4. 14 hours per zone per week in 2012 and 2013

Exhibit 16 illustrates the annual revenue hours, estimated demand, revenue received, and net deficit per capita.

Exhibit 16: Rural Transit Financial Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rural Transit Service</th>
<th>2009 Service Level 1</th>
<th>2010 Service Level 2</th>
<th>2011 Service Level 3</th>
<th>2012 Service Level 4</th>
<th>2013 Service Level 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>18,639</td>
<td>18,639</td>
<td>18,639</td>
<td>18,639</td>
<td>18,639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue Hours</td>
<td>1,864</td>
<td>2,080</td>
<td>2,496</td>
<td>2,912</td>
<td>2,912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Operating Cost</td>
<td>$74,880</td>
<td>$93,600</td>
<td>$112,320</td>
<td>$131,040</td>
<td>$131,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Passenger Ridership</td>
<td>2,796</td>
<td>2,796</td>
<td>5,592</td>
<td>5,592</td>
<td>8,388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Passenger Revenue</td>
<td>$16,775</td>
<td>$16,775</td>
<td>$41,938</td>
<td>$41,038</td>
<td>$62,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Net Cost</td>
<td>$58,105</td>
<td>$76,825</td>
<td>$69,382</td>
<td>$89,102</td>
<td>$68,133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Cost per Capita</td>
<td>$3.12</td>
<td>$4.12</td>
<td>$3.78</td>
<td>$4.78</td>
<td>$3.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The aforementioned service levels are provided for budgeting purposes only. Actual hours of operation could vary based on:
- Start-up demand and marketing efforts.
- Evolving service strategies.
- More integrated role of volunteer services.
- Donations received.

The service plan is recommended to start off small, that is, it must be demand responsive only to ensure that if service is not requested, there is no cost. For example, if Zone A has no request for service, the vehicle is not assigned elsewhere. Another example would be if a customer in Zone A can complete their return trip in six hours, only six hours would be charged and the remaining two hours of the eight hours budgeted could be saved or allocated elsewhere. It will, therefore, be important to track customer use. In this regard, Red Deer Transit Action Bus has secured new software that provides this capability.
10. **FUNDING**

It was concluded that there is a need for public transit and that the cost needed to support public transit service within Red Deer County would be an investment in enhancing community quality of life. The degree that the quality of life would be met will depend on the financial investment committed by the respective towns and communities that comprise the County. Further, the service options identified were presented in an effort to enable the towns to assess the various service levels and their respective costs and benefits, and to see if they would provide adequate funds for public transit similar to other services funded from taxpayers.

10.1 **Existing Funding Programs**

Based on the October 2006 CUTA Report entitled *Federal, Provincial and Territorial Funding of Urban Transit in Canada: A Compendium*, it was found that across Canada, funding contributions come in various forms, dependent on the jurisdiction.

10.1.1 **Federal Funding**

The following is a list of federal funding programs as identified by the Canadian Urban Transit Association in Issue Paper 27: *An Evolving Picture: Federal Transit Investments Across Canada*.

**Building Canada Fund:** In 2007, the Building Canada Fund replaced several other infrastructure funds that have been in place since as early as 2001 (namely the Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund, the Highways and Border Infrastructure Fund, and the Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund). Building Canada will offer $8.8 billion over the period from 2007 through 2014 for a variety of eligible investments including public transit projects. Provincial and territorial governments and municipalities are expected to match federal contributions, and the projects to be funded will be determined through both collaborative and competitive processes.

**New Deal for Cities and Communities:** In 2005, the federal government launched the New Deal for Cities and Communities. It committed to transfer a portion of federal Gas Tax revenues to municipalities for environmentally sustainable infrastructure, including transit. Through the federal Gas Tax Fund, those revenues are now helping to build transit infrastructure wherever provinces and cities have made it their priority. Annual gas tax transfers will rise from $600 million in 2005-2006 to $2 billion in 2009-2010 and remain constant thereafter until at least 2014 – a total of $13 billion over this period. The funds are allocated on a per-capita basis, and spending decisions rest with municipalities.
**Public Transit Capital Trust:** The Public Transit Capital Trust has involved $900 million in federal funding for transit capital projects (rapid transit expansion or renewal, transit stations, rolling stock and transit technologies) from 2006 through 2009. Funds are allocated on a per-capita basis to provinces and territories, and then on a ridership basis within provinces.

### 10.1.2 Provincial Funding

The CUTA published *Federal, Provincial & Territorial Funding of Urban Transit in Canada: A Compendium* and it identified the funding available to Alberta municipalities for Conventional Transit and Specialized Transit which is quoted as follows:

**Operating Costs:**
- No direct operating grants.
- Annual Unconditional Municipal Grant Program funding all, part or none of which may be spent on transit, according to the wishes of the recipient municipality.
  - Value of grant determined by per capita rate.
  - Amount unchanged since 1994.

**Capital Costs:**
- Annual Transportation Capital Grant of $60 per capita for 2006/07. In 2006/07, about $34 million is being provided to the 16 eligible cities:
  - Can be spent on roads and /or transit.
  - Proportion spent on transit specifically determined by each city council.
  - Covers up to 75% of project cost, to the maximum of the grant funds available.
- Alberta Municipal Infrastructure Program:
  - Provides approximately $288 million per year for five years based on population.
  - Can be spent on roads, transit, or other municipal infrastructure.
  - Proportion spent on transit is allocated by each city council depending on the municipality’s current transportation priorities.
- New Deal for Public Transit (2006 to 2015):
  - The New Deal for Public Transit is an amendment to the New Deal for Cities and Communities. The amendment applies specifically to those municipalities that own and operate a provincially recognized public transit system.
  - In 2007, the fund allocated $91 million to Alberta Transit Systems as shown in Exhibit 17.
- Rural Transportation Grants:
  - The purpose of this program is to assist rural municipalities in developing a network of roads to a uniform standard commensurate with demand and need, to increase the safety of the traveling public, and to ensure required engineering is undertaken for approved projects. However, the fund also takes into barrier-free transportation initiatives to improve accessibility for seniors and persons with disabilities. Thus, accessible equipment, low-floor buses, may be eligible for a grant.
Exhibit 17: 2007 New Deal for Public Transit - Grants to Municipalities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Grant Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Airdrie</td>
<td>$519,057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banff</td>
<td>$1,237,908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calgary</td>
<td>$48,084,932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmonton</td>
<td>$31,390,514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grande Prairie</td>
<td>$818,970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lethbridge</td>
<td>$2,038,154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine Hat</td>
<td>$1,076,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Deer</td>
<td>$2,241,740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo</td>
<td>$1,183,684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Albert</td>
<td>$1,126,802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strathcona County</td>
<td>$1,698,328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$91,313,939</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10.1.3 Current Funding

Red Deer County currently receives a $680,000 annual provincial grant for transportation, which is dedicated exclusively to roads for the movement of goods and people. Since public transportation is designed to move people as well, some of the funds should be earmarked for transit.

Two other funds are also available to be tapped for public transportation, including:

1. The Green Fund which is being used by Red Deer County for waste management.
2. The Municipal Sustainability Initiatives (MSI) fund, for which Red Deer County received notice of a $360,000 MSI grant.

The MSI grant could be used to purchase the necessary vehicle(s) to be operated for Conventional Transit as well as Specialized Transit.
11. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions drawn from this study, there is an immediate need for public transportation to Gasoline Alley and an affordable public transit service that would enable rural residents to access Red Deer City and Red Deer County for essential services. The two markets were addressed separately.

11.1 Conventional Transit

Gasoline Alley businesses depend on the larger labour force and market based in Red Deer City and as such, the provision of public transit service to Gasoline Alley will benefit both the County businesses and City residents. Given the proximity of Springbrook to Gasoline Alley and Red Deer City, and the policy framework established, it was determined that the two markets could be served with one transit route.

It is recommended that Red Deer County:

- Approve the policy framework as outlined Section 6 – Policy Framework.
- Approve in principal the Conventional Transit route and service plan outlined in Section 8 – Gasoline Alley and Springbrook.
- Commence negotiations with Red Deer City to:
  - Operate the Conventional Transit service on behalf of Red Deer County.
  - Develop a cost- and revenue-sharing formula.
- Purchase the necessary vehicle(s) to provide the service based on negotiations with Red Deer City.
- Allocate 100% of the estimated $360,000 Municipal Sustainability Initiatives grant for the vehicle and infrastructure needed to support transit.
- Assign a Red Deer County staff member as the transit liaison with Red Deer Transit.
- Subject to reaching an operating and financial agreement with Red Deer City, allocate the necessary funds to support Conventional Transit on an ongoing basis.
11.2 **Rural Transit Service**

Due to the vast area outside of Gasoline Alley and Springbrook, the provision of Conventional Transit is cost-prohibitive; however, there are resident expectations to meet basic community needs relative to access to essential services. The rural environment is distinct from the urbanized areas close to and within Red Deer City and as such, expectations are lower with respect to the provision of public transportation services.

It is recommended that Red Deer County:
- Approve in principal, the rural service strategy outlined in Section 9.1 – Zone-Based Service Strategy.
- Develop a strategy that maximizes the use of volunteer drivers in rural areas.
- Enter into discussions with Alberta Health to share in the cost of non-emergency medical travel for County residents.
- Negotiate with the City of Red Deer to:
  - Extend the service area of Red Deer Transit Action to communities in close proximity to Red Deer City.
  - Provide dispatching services for rural transit.
- Provide the necessary funds to support the Five Year Rural Transit Plan.
12. SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

12.1 Summary

The County identified a number of needs and issues related to meeting the demand for public transportation in the community as a result of the findings in the 2004 Community Service Needs Assessment (CSNA) and the Assessment of Travel Demand (ATD) and Route Analysis for a Connector from Red Deer to Gasoline Alley. Red Deer County Council took proactive action and commissioned this study.

To meet the project needs and objectives, the following study tasks were undertaken:

- Peer reviews of similar-sized municipalities and identification of best practices.
- Extensive Stakeholder consultations.
- A Web-based community survey.
- Identification of relevant policies and assessment framework to evaluate the performance of public transportation services.
- Development of initial service concept design options.
- Identification of funding opportunities and revenue streams in support of public transportation.

Based on the study findings, the County should support the service concepts and recommendations of this report as a basis to move forward. Since the recommendations provide a framework for decision-making based on best practices and community input, there is flexibility in the final service plan, which provides an opportunity for additional community input. The key requirement at this stage is to approve the commitment to provide the funds needed to support public transportation in the community.

12.2 Next Steps

The next steps that should be taken are:

- Presentation of the study findings and recommendations to the business community and residents (County and City) at a Public Open House.
- Commence negotiations with Red Deer City to address the provision of Conventional Transit and some Specialized Transit services.
- Identify bus stop locations (Traffic and Transit staff).
- Undertake a detailed inventory of all the services provided in the rural areas of Red Deer County.
- Work with the existing volunteer services and residents to finalize a rural transit service plan and schedule.
- Approach the Province of Alberta to secure start-up funding and ongoing grants to support the Conventional and Specialized Transit services.
- Approach the Federal Government to determine eligibility for existing funds.
- Provide the funds needed to start up service in 2009.
- Appoint a County staff member as a Transit Coordinator.*
*The Transit Coordinator position could be a part-time responsibility of an existing County staff person, or it could be a dedicated position, as circumstances permit. As the service is rolled out, the effort would likely be minimal – probably about five hours per week depending on the agreement with Red Deer City and the role of volunteers.

The duties of the Transit Coordinator position would include:
- Developing the comprehensive Five-Year Transportation Plan.
- Coordinating funding issues with County Council, the Province and Federal agencies.
- Negotiating agreements and service contracts with service providers, including, potentially, Red Deer City, taxis and volunteer driving services.
- Monitoring agreements and contracts for budget and compliance, and customer service.
- Liaise with volunteer agencies and medical service agencies, as required.
- Reporting to Council on the progress of the Public Transportation Plan, and making recommendations for the annual County budget development process.

There may be an opportunity to commence service earlier than 2009. In this regard, buses could be leased at a cost of up to $3,000 per month plus operating costs. Red Deer County has not provided funds for service in 2008; however, this does not preclude businesses from negotiating with Red Deer Transit to supply the service during the interim. This is considered reasonable since many businesses in Gasoline Alley currently pay for employee travel to and from work in order to recruit and retain employees.
Red Deer County Transit Feasibility Study
County Resident Survey

SECTION 1: GENERAL

1) Which community/area within Red Deer County do you reside in?
   - Red Deer County - Division 1
   - Red Deer County - Division 2
   - Red Deer County - Division 3
   - Red Deer County - Division 4
   - Red Deer County - Division 5
   - Red Deer County - Division 6
   - Red Deer County - Division 7
   - Hamlet of Springbrook
   - Hamlet of Lousana
   - Hamlet of Markerville
   - Hamlet of Spruce View
   - Hamlet of Benalto
   - Other (please specify)

   If you selected other please specify:
   ---------------------------------------------------------------------------

2) Are you:
   - Female
   - Male

3) In which of the following age categories do you fall? Are you:
   - Under 19
   - 19-25
   - 26-45
   - 46-65
   - More than 65 years old

4) Do you have a driver’s License?
   - Yes
   - No

5) Does a physical, sensory, or cognitive impairment prevent you from operating a vehicle?
   - Yes
   - No

6) Which of these categories best describes you?
   - Student
   - Non-student

SECTION 2: STUDENTS (if you are a student - high-school or post-secondary - please fill this section. Otherwise, please go to next section “Non-students”)

May 2008
7) If you are a student, which of the following categories best describes you?
   - High school student
   - Post-secondary student (e.g. Red Deer College)

8) How do you usually get to school?
   - Car, as the driver
   - Car, as a passenger
   - Walk
   - Bicycle
   - Taxi
   - Yellow School Bus
   - Other (please specify)
   If you selected other please specify:

9) Do you have a part-time job?
   - Yes
   - No

10) How do you usually get to work?
    - Car, as the driver
    - Car, as the passenger
    - Walk
    - Bike
    - Taxi
    - Company Bus / Shuttle
    - Other (please specify)
    If you selected other please specify:

11) If you get to your work by Taxi, is your taxi trip subsidized by your employer?
    - Yes
    - No

SECTION 3: NON-STUDENTS (if you are NOT a student - high-school or post-secondary - please fill this section)

12) Which of the following categories best describes you? Are you (check one only):
    - Employed full-time
    - Employed part-time
    - Homemaker
    - Retired
    - Unemployed
    - Other (please specify)
    If you selected other please specify:
13) If you are currently employed, where do you work?
   - Red Deer City
   - Gasoline Alley
   - Other (please specify)
   If you selected other please specify:
   ______________________________________________________________________

14) If you are currently employed, how do you get to and from work?
   - Car, as the driver
   - Car, as the passenger
   - Walk
   - Bike
   - Taxi
   - Company Bus/Shuttle
   - Other (please specify)
   If you selected other please specify:
   ______________________________________________________________________

15) If you get to your work by Taxi, is your taxi trip subsidized by your employer?
   - Yes
   - No

16) What is your gross annual income?
   - Less than $20,000
   - $20,000 to $39,999
   - $40,000 to $59,999
   - $60,000 to 79,999
   - $80,000 or more
   - Don't know/No answer

SECTION 4: Specialized Transit (such as Citizens' Action Bus or a Volunteer wheelchair accessible van)

17) Are you eligible to use Specialized Transit?
   - Yes
   - No

18) If yes,
   What are the main trip purposes for using the Specialized Transit (e.g. Work, Shopping, Medical appointments, Recreational/Leisure, other)?
   Approximately how many one-way trips did you make in the last 4 weeks?
   What is the approximate cost to you per one-way trip?
SECTION 5: OTHER

19) How many persons live in your household, including yourself?
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5
   - 6 or more

20) How many vehicles are owned at your household?
   - None
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3 or more

21) Do you have access to a vehicle to travel?
   - Yes
   - No

22) If you have access to a vehicle, how many days per week do you use it?
    - Every day, including weekends
    - Every working day only
    - Weekends only
    - Irregular use, depending on availability

23) Does the lack of Public Transit prevent you from traveling more often?
    - Yes
    - No

COMMENTS

24) Please provide us with any comments you feel may be beneficial for Red Deer County to take into consideration with respect to our feasibility review of transit services for the County.

__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________

On behalf of the Red Deer County, thank you for taking the time to fill out this form. Please be assured all information will be treated in the strictest confidence.