

Late Agenda Item

**Regular Council Agenda
October 1, 2024**

Recommendation:

That Council amend the agenda to add a presentation to the following item, received after publication of the agenda:

8.2. Rosalie Sawrie, Project Director, Social Planning Cowichan Transportation Plan Project Outcomes.	Page(s) 02-26
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Exploring Transportation Options

FOR LADYSMITH &
SURROUNDING
COMMUNITIES

September 2024



Introduction & Overview

Background Context

- As part of the CVRD, the Town of Ladysmith serves growing suburban neighbourhoods and communities including:
 - Oyster Bay and Stz'uminus First Nation,
 - Area G: Diamond/North Oyster and
 - Area H; Saltair
- Between 2016 and 2020, the population of the Ladysmith [census agglomeration area] increased by 6.4%, from 14,572 to 15,501 residents.
- The median age in Ladysmith was 52.4 years, slightly higher than the rest of the CVRD.

Introduction & Overview

Background Context

- In 2016, the Cowichan Valley North Health Area Profile included 2,375 adults, 2,438 seniors and 3,132 children and youth (<18) living in low income.
- 32.3% of employed workers < 15 years travel outside of Ladysmith but remain within the CVRD census division.
- 36.6% commute to a different census division, such as Nanaimo.

Time spent commuting by employed individuals aged 15 and over:

36.4%

< 15 minutes

31.9%

15-29 minutes

20.4%

30-44 minutes

Introduction & Overview

How We Got Here

- The need for this project was a recommended action from the Town of Ladysmith's Poverty Reduction Strategy
- Public transportation was identified as one of ten priority themes that greatly impacts all themes and quality of life.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



CHALLENGES WE HEARD

We heard from the community that the lack of, or unreliability of public transportation in the Ladysmith and Stz'uminus area is a critical concern for those living in poverty. If you don't have a reliable vehicle, poor public transportation affects every aspect of life, including where you can work, getting groceries, accessing medical appointments or attending post-secondary institutions. For those with physical challenges, the geography of the Town of Ladysmith makes getting around difficult without a vehicle or frequently available public transportation.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

The geography of Ladysmith, the distance between the communities of Ladysmith and Stz'uminus, and the absence of regular public transportation present a significant local challenge for accessing services and employment.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Recommended Actions	Who should participate?			
	Federal	Provincial	ToL/SFN/ SD68/ CVRD*	Individuals/ Organizations*
Improve Local Transportation with Regional Connections				
Establish a focus group with representatives from Stz'uminus First Nation, CVRD, BC Transit, the Town of Ladysmith and interested community members to explore solutions to create connectivity between communities and other areas not serviced by public transit and to Increase frequency of existing routes within Ladysmith and trips south to the rest of the Cowichan Region.		BC Transit	ToL SFN SD68 CVRD RDN	Everybody; Community Engagement
Participate in engagement and planning with Regional District of Nanaimo, CVRD and BC Transit on the new routes between Nanaimo and Ladysmith scheduled for Spring 2022.		BC Transit	ToL SFN SD68 CVRD RDN	Current & potential transit users
Explore interim/long-term transportation options for connecting Stz'uminus First Nation and the Town of Ladysmith.			ToL SFN	Community Engagement
Affordability - Improve access and availability of existing bus service for low income individuals and families, including bus passes, companion passes for seniors, etc.				Individuals

*Town of Ladysmith (ToL), Stz-uminus First Nation (SFN), Nanaimo/Ladysmith School District 68 (SD68), Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD), Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN)

Introduction & Overview

Challenges

Individual transportation costs could be reduced with more focus on improving active and public transportation, however:

- Transit is expensive to fund given the broad geographic nature of the Region.
- Limitations to how each municipality is able to fund their localized services leaving gaps in areas such as:
 - north of downtown to and including Stz'uminus First Nation,
 - Transfer Beach & Ladysmith Marina areas,
 - Davis Road south and
 - other areas including those that have been or will be newly developed.

Introduction & Overview

Challenges

- CVRD Areas H (North Oyster/Diamond) and G (Saltair) do not contribute a portion of their locally collected taxes to transit and therefore do not receive any service to Ladysmith.
- **The Hills.** While many enjoy walking/cycling the hills are a challenge, more so for people with diverse abilities
- Active transportation infrastructure improvements are also costly and will take time to implement.



Introduction & Overview

The **Project Purpose** was to:

- explore the feasibility of the transportation actions proposed in the Poverty Reduction Strategy,
- hear from the community to fully understand the transportation gaps and needs, and
- identify possible solutions.

A Transportation Action Committee was established to guide the public engagement and project process.

Funding for this project was made possible through Island Coastal Economic Trust's Community Passenger Transportation Fund and was awarded in February 2024 to Social Planning Cowichan.

Transportation Action Committee (TAC)

The TAC guided the project and ultimately explored the feasibility of possible solutions to create connectivity between communities not serviced by public transit.

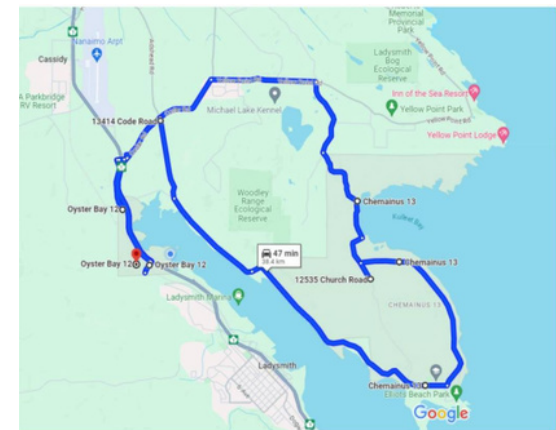
Members included:

- Stz'uminus First Nation senior staff
- Town of Ladysmith member of Council
- CVRD Transit Department Staff
- CVRD Areas G & H Area Directors
- Ladysmith Resource Centre Association
- Ladysmith Chamber of Commerce
- SD68 Board Trustee
- Island Health
- Two community members at large

Stz'uminus Shuttle Service



On July 2, 2024 Stz'uminus First Nation launched a new shuttle bus service creating connection for residents living on Chemainus 13 reserve to Oyster Sto'Lo Road in Oyster Bay and beyond.



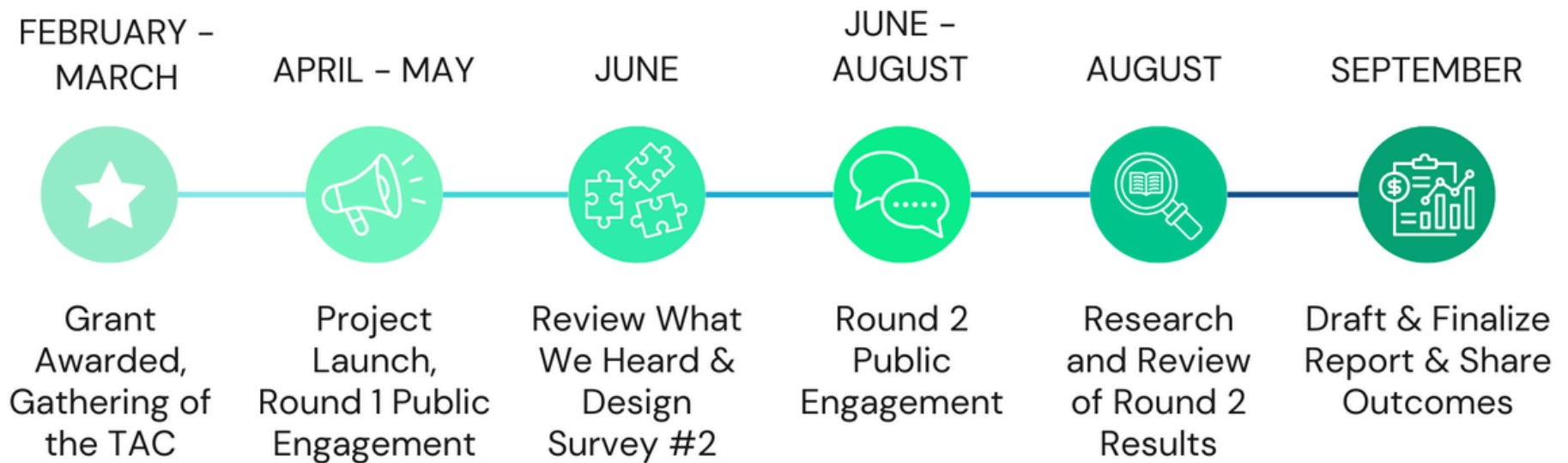
- Operations were in development through community consultations with Stz'uminus members at the time of this project.
- To avoid creating confusion between the two projects, the scope was limited to engaging Stz'uminus members on transportation options available while in Ladysmith only and not addressing transportation to or from Ladysmith from Reserve 13.

Stz'uminus Shuttle Bus (Monday to Friday)													
Time of day	Deer Point Inter.	K8 Inter. below BH	Shaker Church	Sullivan Inter.	Englemere Inter.	Nelson Point Inter.	Teleview Mailbox	Community Centre	Sherrard mail box	Ironmonger Rd	IR 12	Exchange with NCX	NCX Schedule
6:03	6:17	6:19	6:22	6:23	6:24	6:26	6:27	6:28	6:30	6:34	6:48	6:54	7:01
7:10	7:24	7:26	7:29	7:30	7:31	7:33	7:34	7:35	7:37	7:41	7:55	8:01	8:18
8:18	8:32	8:34	8:37	8:38	8:39	8:41	8:42	8:43	8:45	8:49	9:03	9:09	
9:40	9:54	9:56	9:59	10:00	10:01	10:03	10:04	10:05	10:07	10:11	10:25	10:31	
10:38	10:52	10:54	10:57	10:58	10:59	11:01	11:02	11:03	11:05	11:09	11:23	11:29	11:47
11:35	11:49	11:51	11:54	11:55	11:56	11:58	11:59	12:00	12:02	12:06	12:20	12:26	
12:32	12:46	12:48	12:51	12:52	12:53	12:55	12:56	12:57	12:59	1:03	1:17	1:23	1:19
2:03	2:17	2:19	2:22	2:23	2:24	2:26	2:27	2:28	2:30	2:34	2:48	2:54	2:57
3:00	3:14	3:16	3:19	3:20	3:21	3:23	3:24	3:25	3:27	3:31	3:45	3:51	4:09
3:57	4:11	4:13	4:16	4:17	4:18	4:20	4:21	4:22	4:24	4:28	4:42	4:48	
5:44	5:58	6:00	6:03	6:04	6:05	6:07	6:08	6:09	6:11	6:15	6:29	6:35	6:01
6:41	6:55	6:57	7:00	7:01	7:02	7:04	7:05	7:06	7:08	7:12	7:26	7:32	7:33
7:38	7:52	7:54	7:57	7:58	7:59	8:01	8:02	8:03	8:05	8:09	8:23	8:29	
8:35	8:49	8:51	8:54	8:55	8:56	8:58	8:59	9:00	9:02	9:06	9:20	9:26	

Stz'uminus Shuttle Bus (Saturday)													
Time of day	Deer Point Inter.	K8 Inter. below BH	Shaker Church	Sullivan Inter.	Englemere Inter.	Nelson Point Inter.	Teleview Mailbox	Community Centre	Sherrard mail box	Ironmonger Rd	IR 12	Exchange with NCX	NCX Schedule
1:14	1:16	1:19	1:20	1:21	1:23	1:24	1:25	1:27	1:31	1:45	1:51		2:38
2:06	2:08	2:11	2:12	2:13	2:15	2:16	2:17	2:19	2:23	2:37	2:43		4:12
2:58	3:00	3:03	3:04	3:05	3:07	3:08	3:09	3:11	3:15	3:29	3:35		4:16
3:50	3:52	3:55	3:56	3:57	3:59	4:00	4:01	4:03	4:07	4:21	4:27		5:44
4:42	4:44	4:47	4:48	4:49	4:51	4:52	4:53	4:55	4:59	5:13	5:19		5:44
6:04	6:06	6:09	6:10	6:11	6:13	6:14	6:15	6:17	6:21	6:35	6:41		7:34
6:56	6:58	7:01	7:02	7:03	7:05	7:06	7:07	7:09	7:13	7:27	7:33		

Project Timeline

Ladysmith & Surrounding Communities Transportation Project Timeline 2024



The target audience was anyone who lives in Ladysmith or travels to Ladysmith as their community to access goods and/or services.

Key Takeaways from the Engagement Process

Some initial key takeaways from the first round of engagement, highlighted:

- Individuals without vehicle access often feel disconnected from the community.
- Many rely on others for rides, limiting their ability to work, socialize, shop, and engage with nature.
- This especially impacts youth, seniors, and those with diverse abilities.
- While most do not use public transit, many expressed a willingness to use public transit if it had more frequent service and broader coverage.
- Suggestions for a smaller community shuttle with hop-on, hop-off flexibility.

"We would like to reduce to one car but it is difficult in this community. We will need to move from Ladysmith when driving is not an option."

- Survey participant

Key Takeaways from the Engagement Process

- Many also expressed interest in a more reliable taxi service and/or a rideshare program like Uber, Lyft, or Uride (which is currently available in Nanaimo).
- When without access to a vehicle:
 - 66% stated they will walk
 - 35% they would cycle
 - However the hilly terrain is a challenge especially when carrying groceries or in unfavourable weather, etc.

	SURVEY 1	SURVEY 2
Number of Participants	268	223

The top options identified for improving transportation in Ladysmith included:

Option 1: Neighbourhood Shuttle Service

A hop-on, hop-off model for better coverage and connectivity.



Option 2: Active Transportation

Enhanced bike lanes and other safety/security measures.



Option 3: Local Taxi Service

Improved and more frequent local taxi options.



Option 4: Rideshare Service

Recruiting a rideshare service to meet community needs.



Engagement Round 2:

The second round of engagement was conducted to further explore each options, focusing on their feasibility and effectiveness.

Neighbourhood Shuttle Service



This is the most favoured solution for improving transportation

- preference for circular, hop-on/hop-off service.

For a shuttle to be fully utilized, the service needs to:

- have accessible stops;
- run more routes covering more neighbourhoods with connectivity between Downtown and Coronation Mall and other transit connections (esp. #70 NCX bus); and
- have a frequent schedule during the day, later into the evenings and on Sunday and holidays.

Survey respondents outlined several benefits of a neighbourhood shuttle service:

- **Improved Accessibility:** To services, employment, education, social activities, parks, sports, community events, Transfer Beach, medical appointments, etc.
- **Increased Independence**
- **Aging in Place**
- **Improved Safety**
- **Individual & Family Cost Savings**
- **Reduced Traffic**
- **Support for Local Businesses**
- **Boost to Public Transit**
- **Connections to Larger Centres**
- **Backup Transportation**
- **Extended Coverage**

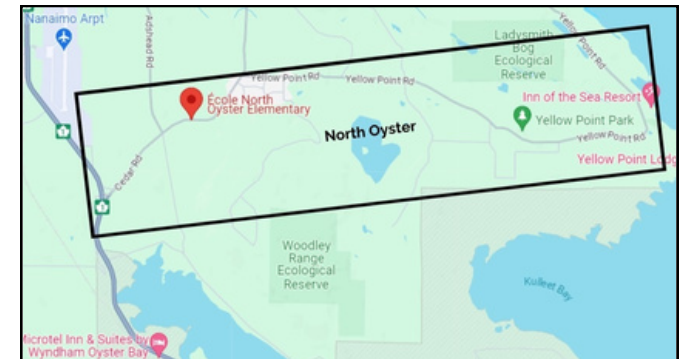
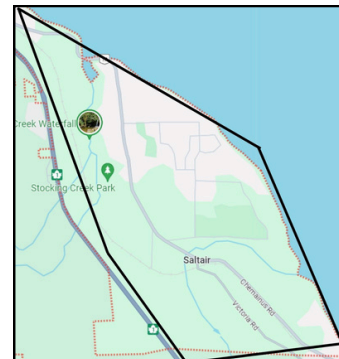
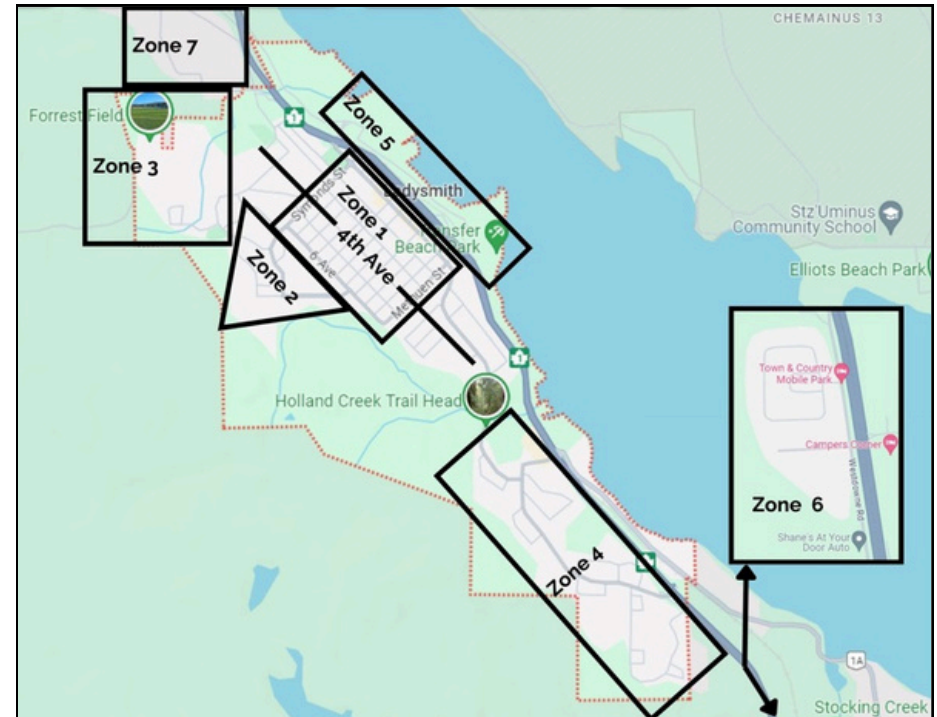


Priority Neighbourhoods for Shuttle Service

Survey respondents identified their top four priority zones:

- Up and down the hill from 1st to 6th between Symonds St. and Methuen Rd. (Zone 1) (38.6%)*
- Saltair (38.6%) – along Chemainus Road*
- Service along 4th Ave (30.7%)*
- Rocky Creek Rd, Ladysmith Marina and Transfer Beach (Zone 5) (30.7%)

*Preference for more frequent connectivity to/from Downtown and Coronation Mall.



Neighbourhood Shuttle Feasibility Summary

Considerations:

- A shuttle would inevitably overlap in coverage with the existing BC Transit routes,
- It would lead to double fare payments for riders making connections, and
- While Provincial and Federal grants are available for capital expenses (i.e. purchasing the shuttles), funding the ongoing operations and maintenance would be difficult
 - especially as the Town of Ladysmith already pays into existing BC Transit service.



Neighbourhood Shuttle Feasibility Summary

The most prudent next steps:

- To share the engagement feedback with BC Transit to explore potential modifications to the current routes in Ladysmith before considering a new shuttle service.

Where a shuttle may be useful if BC Transit is unable to add new routes, is to connect the:

- Transfer Beach/Marina area to downtown
- Oyster Bay to Ladysmith to accommodate Stz'uminus Shuttle riders and workers and residents in that area.
- May consider one for Saltair to connect to Coronation Mall & Chemainus

Active Transportation



Most who are physically able, enjoy active transportation.

Suggestions for improving safety and accessibility included:

- More sidewalks, bike lanes, street lighting, charging stations and secure bike/mobility scooter parking.
- Exploring potential community collaborations to create an E-Bike Share Program and/or an E-Bike Ownership Program.



Active Transportation

Report suggests:

- Encourage public participation in the design of the Town's Mobility Plan to assist in prioritizing the most active transportation routes for improving safety and security and the potential design of a Safe Cycling Route Map
- Include some measures of a safety engagement campaign for vehicle drivers and pedestrians (especially when on e-bikes/scooters).



Local Taxi Service(s)



Disclaimer that information will be shared but as a private enterprise, funding support for this service is not generally possible.

Participants stated:

- A desire for a more reliable and consistent service.
- Emphasized the need for convenient, reliable, door-to-door transportation and flexibility without fixed schedules.
- Helpful for trips in an emergency or out to the Nanaimo Airport or ferry terminals.

Rideshare Service



Similar disclaimer to taxi services.

Benefits similar to taxi with smaller population limiting the demand for a 24/7 service due to low ridership and therefore low incentive for drivers.

Participants stated:

- Only 20% would use it for 24/7 on weekdays, 23% for weekends
- Convenient with the app for booking, paying and rating rider experience.
- Some safety hesitations with riding with strangers.

Could consider overlapping driver shifts with food delivery service apps to compensate for lower ride requests.

Closing Thoughts

Not unusual for rural communities to experience the challenges explored here.

No magic wand but we have to keep the conversation going and allowing for ongoing collaboration, cooperation and innovation.

This project has laid more groundwork for us to explore while also providing some direction to strive for.

Leadership and commitment from all involved to improve opportunities for everyone to increase access, to maintain or improve their independence and to be socially connected and thriving in their community.

Updates & Report:
www.socialplanningcowichan.org
&



@communitytogethertoendpoverty

Thank you all.
Huy tseep q'u.