Town of Drumheller
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
AGENDA

October 31, 2011 at 4:30 PM
Council Chamber, Town Hall
703-2nd Ave. West, Drumheller, Alberta

Page

1.0 CALL TO ORDER

1.1 Councillor Andrew Berdahl to be sworn in as Deputy Mayor for the months of November and December, 2011

2 1.2 Proclamation Month of November 2011 as Seniors' Falls Prevention Month

3 1.3 Proclamation Month of November, 2011 as Family Violence Prevention Month

2.0 DEVELOPMENT OR REVIEW OF STRATEGIC PLAN

3.0 DEVELOPMENT OR REVIEW OF POLICIES

4.0 DELEGATIONS

5.0 REPORTS FROM ADMINISTRATION

5.1. CAO'S REPORT

5.1.1 Badlands Community Facility Update

4-38 5.1.2 Transit Feasibility Study Review (Valley Bus)

5.1.3 Badlands Community Facility Rate Structure

5.1.4 Sale of Downtown Revitalization Corporation to Community Futures

5.2. DIRECTOR OF INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES' REPORT

5.3. DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES' REPORT

5.4. DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES' REPORT

6.0 ANNUAL BUDGET REVIEW

7.0 COUNCIL MEMBERS ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

8.0 IN-CAMERA MATTERS

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS seniors are a vital part of our families, communities and province, giving generously of their wisdom, experience and love; and

WHEREAS one in three seniors will fall each year, with 50% of them falling repeatedly; and

WHEREAS seniors have 9 times more falls than other groups in Alberta; and

WHEREAS falls among our seniors will result in over 7,200 hospital admissions and over 19,400 emergency department visits each year; and

WHEREAS falling, and the fear of falling, can lead to depression and hopelessness, loss of mobility, and loss of independence; and

WHEREAS individuals and organizations from a multitude of disciplines across Alberta are working together to increase awareness of this issue and encourage Albertans to take steps to prevent falling; and

WHEREAS the quality of life is improved for Alberta seniors who remain healthy, active and independent;

NOW THEREFORE, I MAYOR TERRY YEMEN (~~name~~), do hereby proclaim the month of November 2011 to be ***Seniors' Falls Prevention Month*** in (~~location~~) DRUMHELLER.

Family Violence Prevention Month

Whereas there are many people in Alberta who experience family violence; and whereas the affects of family violence may be carried on from generation to generation; and whereas all Albertans have a role to play in preventing family violence.

Now, therefore, I Mayor Terry Yemen do hereby proclaim the month of November 2011 to be **Family Violence Prevention Month** in Drumheller.

I call upon citizens to speak out against family violence. I call upon you to make a difference by creating a culture of support for those affected by family violence. And I call upon you to encourage all Albertans to help make our province violence free in 2011 and beyond. You can speak up for those who are silenced.

In witness whereof,
I have here unto set my hand this
31st **Day of ~~November~~ OCTOBER, 2011**

Big Country Anti-Violence Association
End the Silence, Stop the Violence

Town of Drumheller

Town of Drumheller
Transit Feasibility Study

Drumheller, AB

July 2009

Final Copy

Town of Drumheller

Town of Drumheller
Transit Feasibility Study

Drumheller, AB

July 2009

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To be completed.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Overview of the Town – population, demographics, map, etc.

In 2008, Drumheller contributed $52,500 towards the $199,539 cost to operate the VBS service where the remaining funds are secured through donations, casino contributions, charters, and user fees. Since the eligibility of the VBS service consists of residents that are unable to drive or are 50 years of age and older, the VBS door-to-door service is a partial community-based public transit service and a specialized (wheelchair-accessible) transit service.

As the Town of Drumheller demographics change and quality of life issues surface, more demands will be placed directly on the VBS and indirectly on elected officials. The situation appears to have reached this point, creating a need for this study to address long-term solutions and a short-term plan to get there.

1.2 Study Objective

The objective of the Town of Drumheller Transit Feasibility Study is to provide a high level assessment of the existing services provided by the Valley Bus Society (VBS) and the opportunity to introduce fixed route services. The opportunity to provide fixed route service is examined in the context of what other similar sized municipalities are doing in terms of best practices. These findings were used to assist the Town in determining the level of financial commitment that would be necessary to meet resident needs in a fiscally responsible manner.

2. VALLEY BUS SOCIETY

The foregoing is a summary of the Valley Bus Society (VBS) operation.

2.1 Current Services

Fleet

Year	Model	Passenger Capacity	Wheelchair Positions	Vehicle Purpose
2002	Ford bus	19	1	Spare operated within town
2004	Chevrolet Van	3	1	Charters
2005	Chevrolet Van	6 -7	0	Charters
2008	Ford Bus	9	2	Regular service and charters
2008	Ford Bus	18	Up to 4	Regular Service and charters

Fleet Maintenance

The VBS fleet is owned by the VBS and maintained at the Town of Drumheller at a cost that is charged to the VBS that covers 'put of pocket' labour and material costs only. Approximately $50,000 is charged to the VBS annually with services 'in kind' of about $20,000. The in kind costs are what would likely be charged if the vans were maintained by the private sector to cover overhead but excluding profit.

Service Hours

- Regular scheduled and dispatched service:
  - Monday through Friday
  - 8:45am – 4:45pm
- Charter service: as requested

Demand

- Approximately 2,000 passengers per month/ 24,000 per year
- 10 charters per month/ 120 per year
- Dispatch receives an average of over 700 calls per month/ 9,000 per year

Financial (2008)

- Costs: $199,539
  - 70 % labour expenses
  - 27% maintenance, fuel and insurance
  - 3% administration
- Revenue: $191,311 attributed as follows:
  - 26% from Town
  - 25% from dial-a-bus fares

- 20% from contracted services
- 15% from charters
- 7% from other sources (donations, etc.)
- 7% from advertising revenues

- Fare structure:
  - :In-town dial- a-bus fare $3.50 one-way with out of town zone fares with increments of $1.00 up to $6.50
  - Charter and contract services are charged at rates to at least recover the full cost of service

Organization

- Staff level
  - 7–8 drivers (one full time only)
  - 2 clerical and dispatch staff
- Staff accountability to VBS
- VBS accountable to Town of Drumheller; no formal staff link with the Town
- Passenger complaints and commendations dealt with by VBS staff and board members
- Only one telephone line is available
- There is no dispatching software and detailed record keeping of trips made by VBS

2.2 Governance

Industry practice across Canada is diverse with regard to governance structures. In some cities, the municipal transit system delivers para-transit service. Drivers, schedulers and administrators are city employees. In others, driving and sometimes trip booking and scheduling are provided by a non-profit organization – either the legacy organization that originally founded the service such as the VBS or a non-profit specifically created by a transit authority. The Valley Bus Society provides all the services; however, not all residents are entitled to the service and for the purpose of this Transit Feasibility Study, the VBS is an organization that provides specialized transit to a customer base that must meet the established criteria.

The VBS is faced with growing demands for its services, which will not subside since the population is aging and fewer people will be able to drive. The VBS is responsible for a service whose customer eligibility criteria consists of those that cannot drive as well as those that are physically able to drive but do not have access to an automobile and are over 50 years of age.

Typically, not-for-profit transportation services are operated for those that are not physically able to drive, including the cognitively disabled, or for residents that are unable to walk to a bus stop where regularly scheduled transit service (conventional transit) is provided. This is known as specialized transit. Those that do not qualify can be provided with conventional transit service, where available, or only served by specialized transit when space is available.

It can be concluded that as the population ages and demand for VBS service increases, costs will increase if the demand is to be met. The only option that would likely be pursued if financial support is not adequate to meet the demand is to serve those in most need – the disabled – while others would need to find alternate means to travel, which can be cost prohibitive to the individuals. This grey area is proving to be a challenge and it is this population group that can fall through the cracks if budgets are tightened.

2.3 Suggested Best Practices - Service Concepts

The Valley Bus Society is faced with growing demands for its services, which will not subside and as such, it can be expected that demands for additional funding at the local and external government levels will increase. The challenge is that Town of Drumheller has a small population base and regular transit service (conventional transit) can be relatively expensive. If the Town of Drumheller were to directly operate the VBS service, financial and vehicle donations would likely disappear, creating a need to increase the tax base.

There are, however, opportunities to create a family of services to meet public transportation needs that is affordable through the implementation of strategies that can meet the needs of those in most need while accommodating those that are not mobility disabled. Further, since the Town of Drumheller is a tourist destination for approximately 500,000 visitors per year, consideration can be given to providing charter tours using an appropriate transit vehicle.

A number of alternative service concepts can be considered for the Town of Drumheller based on best practices:

- One business unit operated by VBS service for the physically and cognitively disabled would continue
- A separate business unit (budget) to operate a fixed route service to serve all residents, regardless of age can be set up
- A community bus service that is wheelchair accessible and available to all residents can operate on a fixed route that joins key customers being carried today to key destinations; this will reduce the demand on the VBS dial-a-ride and some contracted services.
- Investigating the use of private taxis that are wheelchair equipped and where full fares are paid to the operator and subsidized by the VBS during low demand periods can be considered (this is known as Taxi Scrip). As an example, the city of Hamilton, Ontario has a mature taxi scrip program, which now provides the equivalent of 50% of the trips provided by Specialized Transit. Fifteen percent of these trips are by accessible taxi type vehicles.
- Using taxi vans to provide limited fixed route scheduled services to outlying communities and connect them with the local bus service at a major stop location (e.g. shopping centre or downtown); these taxis would be contracted based on their hourly rate.

To assist ion the decision-making, a peer review of what other municipalities are doing was undertaken.

3. PEER REVIEW

iTRANS identified a number of similar-sized municipalities across Canada in a peer review to assist the Town of Drumheller in determining what the expectations are for public transit today and for the future. The peer reviews should be 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. Two separate peer reviews were carried out – one for conventional transit and another for specialized/ wheelchair accessible transit.

3.1 Purpose

The purpose of a peer review is to assist the Town of Drumheller and its stakeholders in assessing itself against its peers, thereby establishing reasonable expectations for service both in the present and the future, and to do this during the initial stages of the study.

3.2 Methodology

This review uses data from the same dataset used to produce the Canadian Urban Transit Association's (CUTA) 2007 Canadian and Ontario Transit Fact Book for conventional and specialized transit systems. iTRANS compared various operating, financial and performance data among municipalities with a population of 5,000 to 15,000.

The median value of each of the peer review statistics was used as a basis to help establish reasonable expectations for stakeholders during the initial stakeholder consultations.

3.3 Conventional Transit Peer Review

Table 1 provides a comparison of key statistics in similar sized municipalities to Drumheller.

Table 1: Conventional Transit Peer Review

TRANSIT SYSTEM	SERVICE AREA POPULATION	SERVICE AREA (SQUARE KM)	DENSITY (PEOPLE PER SQUARE KM)	VEHICLES	REVENUE HOURS	REVENUE KILOMETRES	REVENUE PASSENGERS	OPERATING EXPENSES	OPERATING REVENUE
DRUMHELLER	7,932	108	73						
KENORA	6,700	16	419	2	3,214	63,408	57,635	187,026	112,919
LOYALIST	8,200	340	24		5,700	171,000	108,940	383,027	125,371
HUNTSVILLE	10,000	12	833	3	4,590	82,521	17,087	167,573	19,865
COBOURG	10,602	13	814	4	10,498	245,989	73,953	571,563	127,212
TEMISKAMING SHORE	11,667	182	64	3	7,435	237,796	91,149	132,270	15,146
ELLIOT LAKE	12,000	16	750	2	7,519	173,700	132,906	441,170	267,948
MIDLAND	12,500	31	410	2	3,010	73,400	48,378	173,200	57,928
PORT HOPE	13,000	13	992	2	3,120	73,440	24,290	174,900	35,436
CLARENCE-ROCKLAND	14,000	23	603	16	14,667	373,333	238,848	1,951,677	1,181,346
COLLINGWOOD	15,000	19	806	3	7,121	153,718	67,488	344,743	67,488
MEDIAN	11,834	17	677	3	6,411	162,359	70,721	265,885	90,204
AVERAGE	11,367	66	572	4	6,687	164,831	86,067	452,715	201,066

Exhibit 1 through **Exhibit 5** graphically illustrates the indicators from **Table 1**. Although far more detailed statistics are available, the information required to guide the study are high

level as their purpose is to determine what the expectations are for public transit today and for the future.

What is very clear in the peer review is that the Town of Drumheller is rural with a population density of 72 persons per square kilometre. This provides challenges in terms of cost containment, which will need to be addressed.

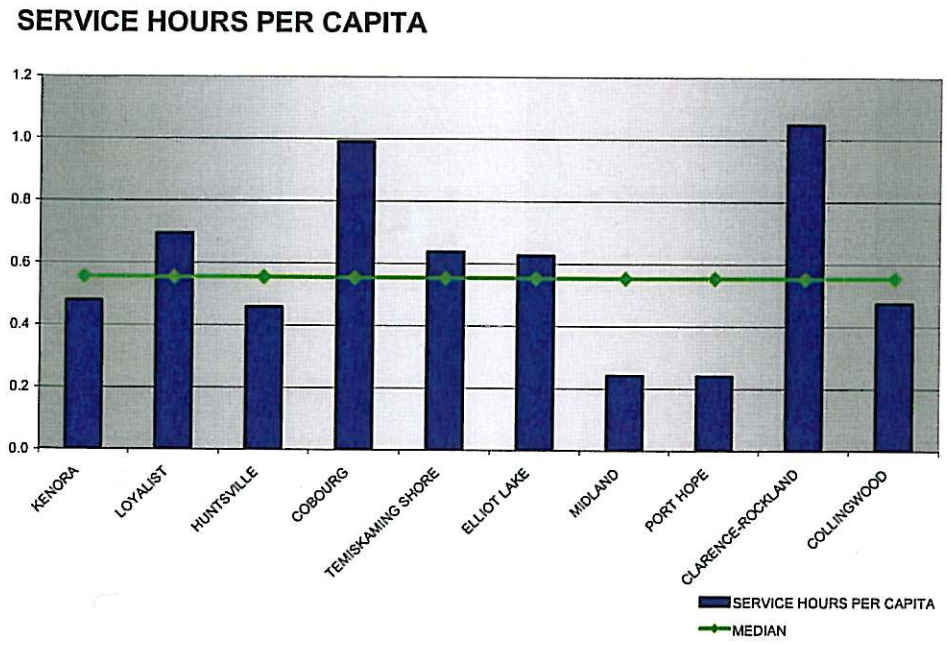

Exhibit 1: Annual Service Hours Per Capita

As seen in **Exhibit 1**, Annual Service Hours per Capita range from under 0.2 hours to over 1.0 hours with a median value of 0.55 hours. The information provides a guide to what the expectations would be for Drumheller in terms of service hours. Assuming the median value of 0.55 hours per capita applies to the Town of Drumheller, this would equate to 4,363 service hours a year or 84 hours a week.

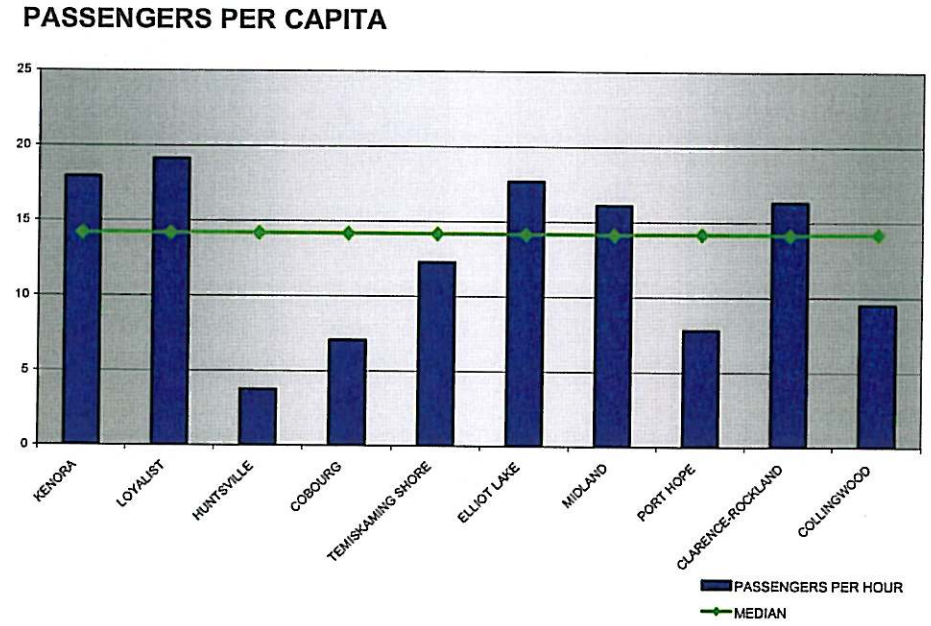

Exhibit 2: Passengers per Capita

As seen in **Exhibit 2**, annual passengers per capita range from 0.5 to 20.0, with a median value of 14 passengers per capita. This suggests that a transit system in a municipality of similar size to Drumheller could serve approximately 4,000 to 16,000 passengers annually, depending on the investment that would be made.

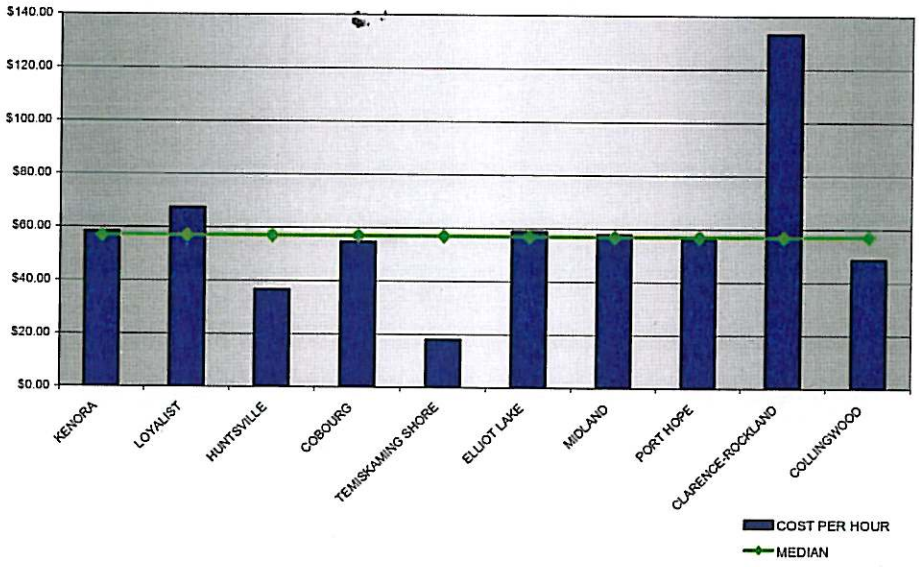

Exhibit 3: Cost per Hour

As seen in **Exhibit 3**, the cost per service hour ranges from approximately $30 per hour to $130 per hour with a median value of $60 per hour. A number of the peer review systems have a cost approximating $60.00 per hour, which may be applicable to the Town of Drumheller as well.

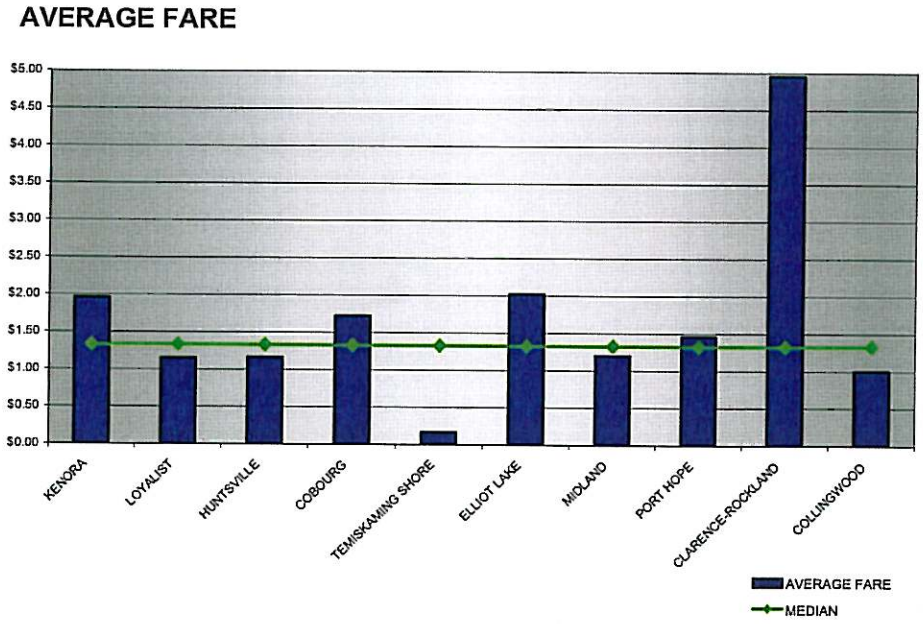

Exhibit 4: Average Fare

The average fare is calculated by dividing all revenues received by the number of passengers that use the service. Since bus fares may differ by passenger classification (adults, seniors, students, etc.) or the distance travelled, an average is taken. As seen in **Exhibit 4**, the peer review data ranges from approximately from $0.20 to $5.00 with a median value of $1.33. Many transit systems price the service in the $2.00 range, today.

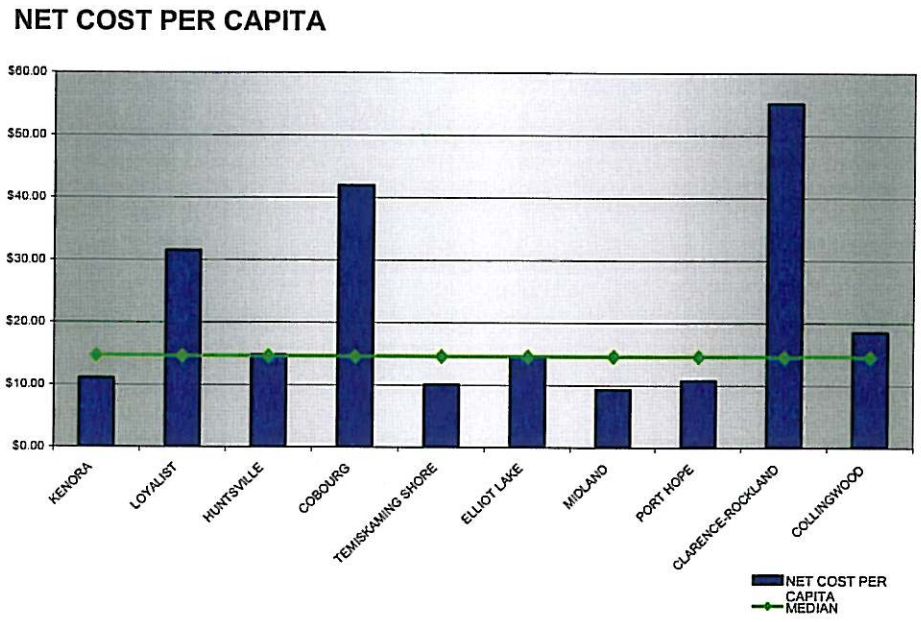

Exhibit 5: Net Cost per Capita

As seen in **Exhibit 5**, the Net Investment (Cost) per Capita (total cost less revenues) varies significantly, ranging from approximately $10 to $55 with a median value of $14.60. The net investment (cost) depends directly upon the municipal commitment to provide service.

3.4 Specialized Transit Peer Review

Table 2 provides a comparison of key statistics in similar sized municipalities to Drumheller.

Table 2: Specialized Transit Peer Review

TRANSIT SYSTEM	SERVICE AREA POPULATION	SERVICE AREA	DENSITY (PEOPLE PER SQUARE KM)	VEHICLES	REGISTRANTS	% WHEELCHAIR	ANNUAL TRIPS	REVENUE COST RATIO
DRUMHELLER	7,932	107	74					
GREENSTONE	5,600	3,000	2	2	69	23%	6,882	0.04
DYSART ET AL	6,500	1,506	4	1	129	36%	1,186	0.44
HEARST	6,643	841	8	1	260	18%	7,128	0.2
FORT FRANCES	8,135	26	314	2	227	0%	29,557	0.11
DRYDEN	8,198	65	126	1	265	17%	5,567	0.12
KAPUSKASING	8,500	84	101	2	380	0%	15,183	0.17
WEST PERTH	8,839	579	15	2	419	37%	5,784	0.41
MEAFORD	10,000	400	25	1	294	9%	5,816	0.42
ST. MARYS	10,749	406	27	2	450	0%	8,685	0.32
ELLIOT LAKE	11,500	16	719	1	225	38%	6,780	0.13
MEDIAN	8,349	403	26	2	263	18%	6,831	0.19
AVERAGE	8,466	692	134	2	272	18%	9,257	0.24

Exhibit 6 through **Exhibit 8** graphically illustrates a number of the indicators and conclusions that can be drawn from the comparisons made.

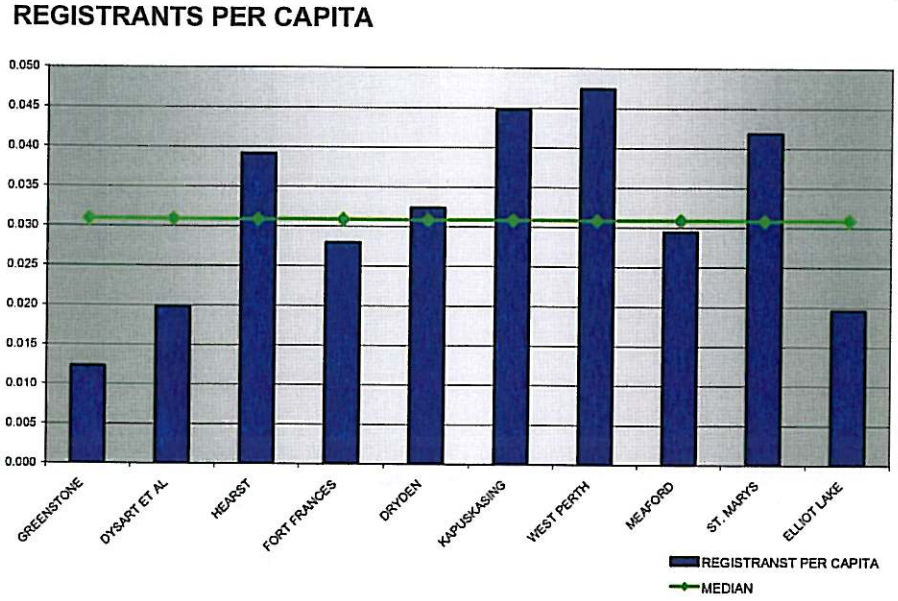

Exhibit 6: Registrants per Capita

As seen in **Exhibit 6**, 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 based on locally established criteria. The median value indicates 3% of the population is registered. This will increase as the population continues to age.

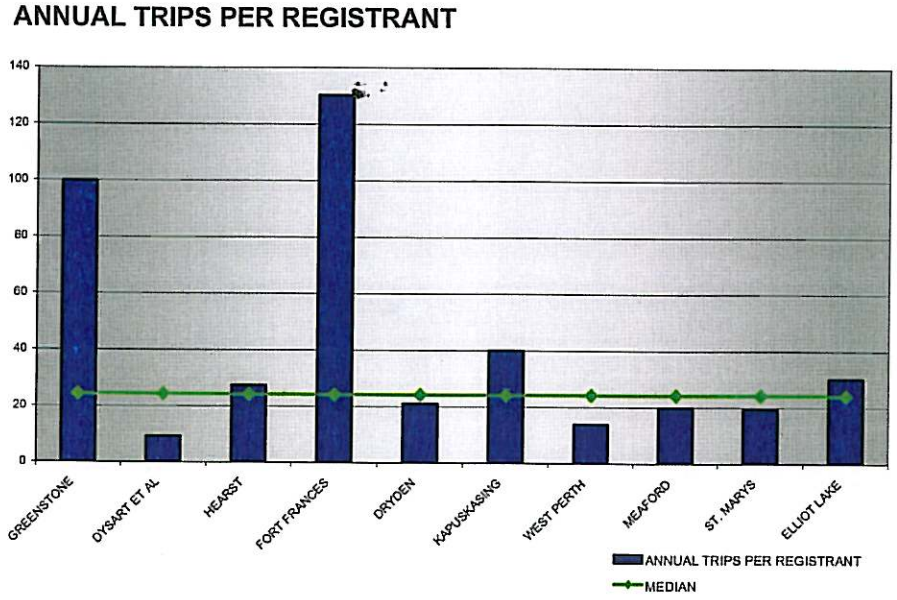

Exhibit 7: Trips per Registrant

As seen in **Exhibit 7**, the amount of trips taken by customers of specialized transit varies depending on the amount of service available, the degree of the disability and individual travel needs, and availability of family members or volunteers to meet their travel needs. The median value is 24 trips per registrant, which will vary depending on the maturity of the service. For example, the Municipality of Prince Edward County in Ontario initiated a part time service in 2007 and is increasing service as planned over a 5-year period; the use of the service per registrant is anticipated to increase accordingly.

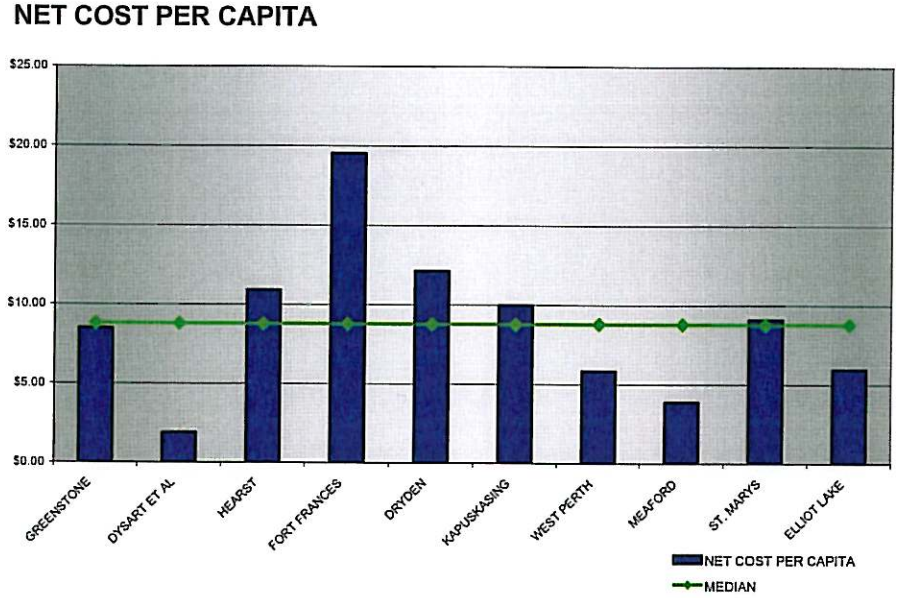

Exhibit 8: Net Cost per Capita

As seen in **Exhibit 8**, many factors impact the Net Investment (Cost) per Capita to support specialized transit service in a community. The peer review revealed that the range can be significant – from $1.89 to $19.51 per capita; however, the median value of $8.78 per capita provides a guide that can be followed when establishing reasonable expectations.

3.5 Community Investment in Public Transportation

Based on the Conventional Transit and Specialized Transit peer reviews, the median investment per capita was $14.60 and $8.78, respectively, for a total of $23.38 (2007 dollars). To put this into perspective, if the investment were applied in Drumheller, the cost per capita would approximate to $24.80 in 2010 based on a 2% annual inflation, which is far less than the average cost of a tank of gas per person each year.

The Town of Drumheller contributed $52,500 in 2008 to support the VBS, which approximates a net investment per capita of $7.50 based on a population of 7,000. This is

well below the median investment of the peer group, which was $23.38 (2007). However, the investment must be affordable and recognize that environments can differ significantly. It is clear; however, that additional investment is required since the service provided is clearly inadequate to meet resident needs.

4. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

iTRANS Consulting conducted a series of stakeholder consultations that consisted of a focus group meeting and several personal interviews, which have been summarized.

4.1 Challenges

The stakeholder consultation process revealed the following challenges with the current Valley Bus Society:

- **Efficiency**: The nature of Valley Bus Society's demand responsive service and the service area covered provide challenges to maintain efficiencies.
- **Volunteer Capacity:** The Valley Bus Society's vans are operated by volunteers. At present, volunteers are at capacity.
- **Financial:** Donations to the Valley Bus Society are decreasing, creating financial constraints.
- **Operational Issues:** VBS currently faces operational issues due to limited resources given that the number of vehicles has been reduced from 3 vehicles to 2 vehicles with a 3rd vehicle to be used as a spare.
- **Eligibility Criteria**: Current eligibility for VBS service is either 50 years old or an individual with a disability
- **Employee Retention**: Current wages paid are insufficient to attract drivers and administrative staff, resulting in turnover.

The stakeholder consultation revealed the following foreseen challenges with a fixed route service:

- **Car Culture**: There is a significant car culture.
- **Governance issues:** Who would operate the service and who would be accountable, etc.?
- **Costs**: The higher costs associated with operating a larger bus on a fixed route will need to be supported by the taxpayer.

4.2 Opportunities

The stakeholder consultation process revealed the following opportunities with the current Valley Bus Society:

- **Grants:** Tourism grants provide an opportunity for additional funding. It is important to capitalize on these grants since donations are decreasing.
- **Weekend Service**: Weekend service is currently not provided by VBS, however there are frequent requests. Typical requests for service are between 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM.
- **Seniors Market**: The senior market provides a steady customer base. Seniors are currently using the VBS service, but would migrate to a fixed route service.
- **Tourism Market**: There is an opportunity to utilize transit vehicles as tourist buses when they are not in use. If service hours and days of service are expanded, a second bus can be purchased and used as a spare.

5. TRANSIT SERVICE OPTIONS

5.1 Description of Vehicle Types

There are a number of vehicle types available to serve different markets, namely:

- Taxis
- Vans with and without wheelchair lifts
- Light duty vehicles with wheel chair lifts (similar to VBS vehicle)
- Heavy duty community buses
- Conventional heavy duty transit vehicles

In terms of assessing the feasibility of a bus service for the Town of Drumheller, the focus would be in developing a preferred vehicle option or options that would complement the demand responsive VBS service, which is designed to provide mobility to those in the community that have no alternative.

5.2 Description of Transit Service Options

There are a number of transit service delivery options available that can complement the existing Valley Bus Society (VBS) service and reduce the demand for VBS service. A description of each option was provided for information purposes and to lead to a vehicle recommendation for the Town of Drumheller.

5.2.1 Conventional Transit Service

Conventional transit mirrors the service provided by other established transit systems across Canada where buses operate along fixed-routes on a defined schedule. Variations in scheduling frequency and routing lead to different names for this service such as conventional transit and community bus.

Conventional transit is the most common public transportation service operated in towns and cities along a fixed-route that operates on a public timetable. Buses range in size from 9.2 metre light-duty vehicles to heavy-duty 12.2 - 18.3 metre articulated buses but the most common is a 12.2 metre (40-foot) bus.

Service is generally provided along main roadways and serves main area destinations. Conventional transit routes tend to be direct in order to be more competitive with the automobile for the work and school trip, where travel times are important. During the morning and afternoon peak period commutes, the vehicles required are at a maximum.

Since the early 1990's, conventional buses are of the low-floor design, which eliminated steps needed when boarding and as such, are accessible to passengers boarding with mobility devices.

Conventional transit service has the following characteristics:

- Wheelchair accessible
- Reliable Fixed-routes and schedules
- Service tends to be more frequent during the peak periods
- Design for peak passenger loads to accommodate the work and school trip and are able to accommodate typical off-peak service for other trips such as shopping, leisure, medical, and personal business

Recommendation: Ideal but not to be considered until the demand for public transportation has matured.

5.2.2 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 as well as accommodating other citizens. Community bus routes are laid to link major origins and destinations for non-work-based such as trips linking seniors' residences, shopping centres, recreational facilities, and medical buildings. Unlike Conventional Transit, community bus routes frequently use lower-tier roadways, 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 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 in larger systems during that time. A smaller Conventional Transit vehicle can be used as a community bus to service areas (e.g. seniors' centres) where a larger vehicle would have difficulty accessing; however, total operating cost savings are marginal when compared to conventional transit vehicles.

Recommendation: To be considered in the service model design exercise

5.2.3 Fixed-route Shared-Ride Taxi Service

Fixed-route shared-ride taxi service is generally employed in areas of low demand, that is, where conventional transit service is not warranted. Taxis, usually a van, would follow a fixed-route and schedule and stop only at designated points, or bus stops. Passengers would board the taxi van, pay the normal fare and be issued transfers, if required. In essence, a taxi is used in place of a bus. The significant benefit is that of cost.

The portion of an hourly taxi rate can be negotiated based on the interest level obtained from the taxi industry. For example, if the hourly fee is $40 and the taxi van is only needed for 30 minutes of each hour, then it would cost $20 per trip. Shared ride taxis are used in conjunction with conventional transit fixed-routes and are applied as an interim solution until conventional transit service is warranted. No dispatching is required for this option. Since taxis would not offer a door-to-door service, the service is not viewed as competing with the regular taxi service provided.

Recommendation: To be considered during the service model design exercise

5.2.4 Taxi Scrip Service

Taxi scrip service involves the equipping of a taxi(s) so that it is wheelchair accessible. If demand warrants, the taxi can be dispatched if the VBS van is not available. Outside of normal VBS hours, eligible VBS customers would be able to travel at 50% of the fare with the balance funded by the VBS or agency.

Recommendation: To be considered by VBS

5.2.5 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 or driver cell phone to request service; this is similar to the VBS operation. 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 fixed transit route, if necessary, to complete a long trip. On the return trip, the process is the same where the customer may be required to call 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.

Costs per passenger can be significantly higher than the shared-ride fixed route taxi service since the drivers are paid for the each hour in service.

Recommendation: Not to be considered further

5.2.6 Specialized Wheelchair Accessible Transit

Specialized transit, also known as Paratransit, is a wheelchair accessible public transportation service. Specialized transit is a reservation-based service, often requiring a minimum 24-hour reservation, which serves residents that meet eligibility criteria. Most often, eligibility criteria requires that customers cannot physically access public transit, use mobility aids, or are cognitively disabled. Some specialized transit agencies will allow other customers on board provided there is space available. The cost of the service per customer is far greater than regular conventional transit and it is recognized that as the population ages, there will be significant increases in demand.

The purpose of this study is to address a fixed route service and as such, the fixed route service is designed to accommodate all residents. By doing so, there will be a reduction in the need for services of the Valley Bus Society, which will be better suited to accommodating the growth in demand for door to door service.

Recommendation: To be continued by the Town of Drumheller.

5.2.7 Charter Bus Service

Charter buses can be operated to accommodate trips within the Town and to destinations outside of the community. The intent of the charter service is to make a profit. Typically, municipalities that operate a transit service will use spare buses in their municipal fleet to accommodate charters. In Drumheller, the VBS operates about 10 to 12 charter trips per year, charging $75 to $100 per hour. Also, the tourism market (500,000 visitors per year) is one that can be tapped by using the community bus when it is not in scheduled operation.

Recommendation: To be considered further by the Town of Drumheller.

5.3 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
- Charter bus service

A high-level matrix comparing the service delivery concepts and options is provided as follows:

Table 3: Service Options Comparison

Service Type and Description	Vehicle Options	Relative Operating Cost	Disadvantages	Advantages
Fixed-route Conventional Transit (all day service)	Heavy duty buses	Highest	▪ Most expensive to purchase and operate.	▪ Highest capacity. ▪ Mobility aid accessible.
Community Bus Service	Heavy duty buses (mid to large size)	Mid to high	▪ Does not meet most work trip needs. ▪ Infrequent service.	▪ Serves more origins and destinations. ▪ Mobility aid accessible.
Fixed-route Shared-ride Taxi Service	Sedan, Large Van or Small Bus	Low	▪ Minimal capacity – limited to off-peak or peak feeder services.	▪ Feeder service for areas not accessible to transit. ▪ Costs apply to portion of taxi hourly cost. ▪ Ideal for new residential areas or feeder services. ▪ Low cost for late evening trips.
Dial-a-ride Bus Service [operated by City or Taxi Company (usually connects with Transit)]	Heavy duty bus or van	Mid to high – depends on vehicle option	▪ Customer must call in to operator cell phone. ▪ Vehicle must be available (full hourly rate applies) ▪ Longer wait times for customer. ▪ Indirect routes.	▪ Applicable to more remote areas. ▪ Flexible hours of operation.
Taxi Scrip (wheelchair accessible)	Taxi Sedan or Van	Mid	▪ Taxi must be wheel-chair accessible ▪ Capital cost to convert	▪ Used only when required ▪ Travel outside of normal VBS hours is available (at full or partial cost to customer)
Charter Bus Service	Uses existing fleet	Profit driven	▪ Demand must be predictable if operated as a profit centre	▪ Drumheller can market the charter service to tourists and to local residents ▪ Charter vehicle can use existing fleet or a spare community bus, which can be provided as a VBS spare

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the aforementioned, the following infrastructure, routing and service concepts were recommended for costing purposes:

5.4.1 Infrastructure

The following infrastructure is recommended:

1. The Town of Drumheller purchase a heavy duty wheelchair accessible transit vehicle that is approximately 9.2 metres (30-foot) in length that will accommodate approximately 25 seated passengers and 15 standees with the ability to carry two wheelchair passengers; the existing 18-passeneger 2008 Ford Bus can be used as a spare or for charter services
2. Provide funding to retrofit a taxi operator(s) vehicle to accommodate one wheelchair passenger for trips that cannot be accommodate by VBS during regular service hours and to introduce a taxi scrip service outside of normal service hours
3. Purchase a low-cost dispatching software to track demand-responsive VBS door-to-door service and charters
4. Install bus stops along the fixed route bus service including bus stop landing areas (concrete pads) and shelters at key locations

5.4.2 Service

The following services concepts are recommended:

1. A community bus route be introduced in the urban area of Drumheller including the communities of Midland and Nacmine on alternate trips as a service to all residents, operating during the current business hours and expanded as demand warrants; this service would replace the current scheduled service; at all other times. During the tourist season, the community bus can be used as a tourist charter
2. A fixed-route taxi service serving the outlying communities from East Coulee to Drumheller be introduced with minimum service hours and on selected days, which can be increased as demand warrants
3. A taxi scrip program be assessed to provide service to eligible VBS customers during non VBS hours of operation (fares would be 50% subsidized)
4. One wheelchair accessible vehicle should be dedicated to the demand responsive VBS door-to-door service
5. Other vehicles would be provided for out-of-town service at a cost that is not subsidized directly by the taxpayer (i.e. the true cost of the service should include capital, operating, and administrative expenses).

5.4.3 Community Bus Route Design

For the community bus service, a conceptual route has been designed. The design process was guided by the following principles:

- Replace the existing charter service origins and destinations with a fixed route that is expanded to serve all residents and major destinations in the Drumheller urban area

- Design the route schedule for ease of understanding (every hour, if possible)

A seen in **Exhibit 9**, the community bus route provides service to urban Drumheller and services Mildand and Nicamine on alternating trips. For example, trip 1 would service urban Drumheller, identified as the core route, and Midland. Trip 2 would service urban Drumheller and Nacmine. In effect, this creates an hourly service in urban Drumheller and two hour service in both Nacmine and Midland.

5.4.4 Fixed-Route Shared Ride Taxi

For the fixed-route shared ride taxi service, a conceptual route has been designed. The design process was guided by the following principles:

- Provide service to outlying communities to East Coulee
- Connect outlying service to downtown Drumheller

As seen in **Exhibit 10**, the fixed-route shared ride taxi provides service to outlying communities to the east of urban Drumheller. The service is 45 minutes in duration and connects East Coulee, Cambria, Rosedale and Aerial to downtown Drumheller.

5.4.5 Taxi Scrip Service

For the accessible Taxi scrip service, the taxi can be dispatched outside of normal VBS hours, whereby eligible VBS customers would be able to travel at 50% of the fare with the balance funded by the VBS or agency. For budgeting purposes, an estimated 970 rides per year (1st year) where the average taxi charge would be $10 on average, leaving the customer to pay $5 and the Town responsible for the remaining $5.

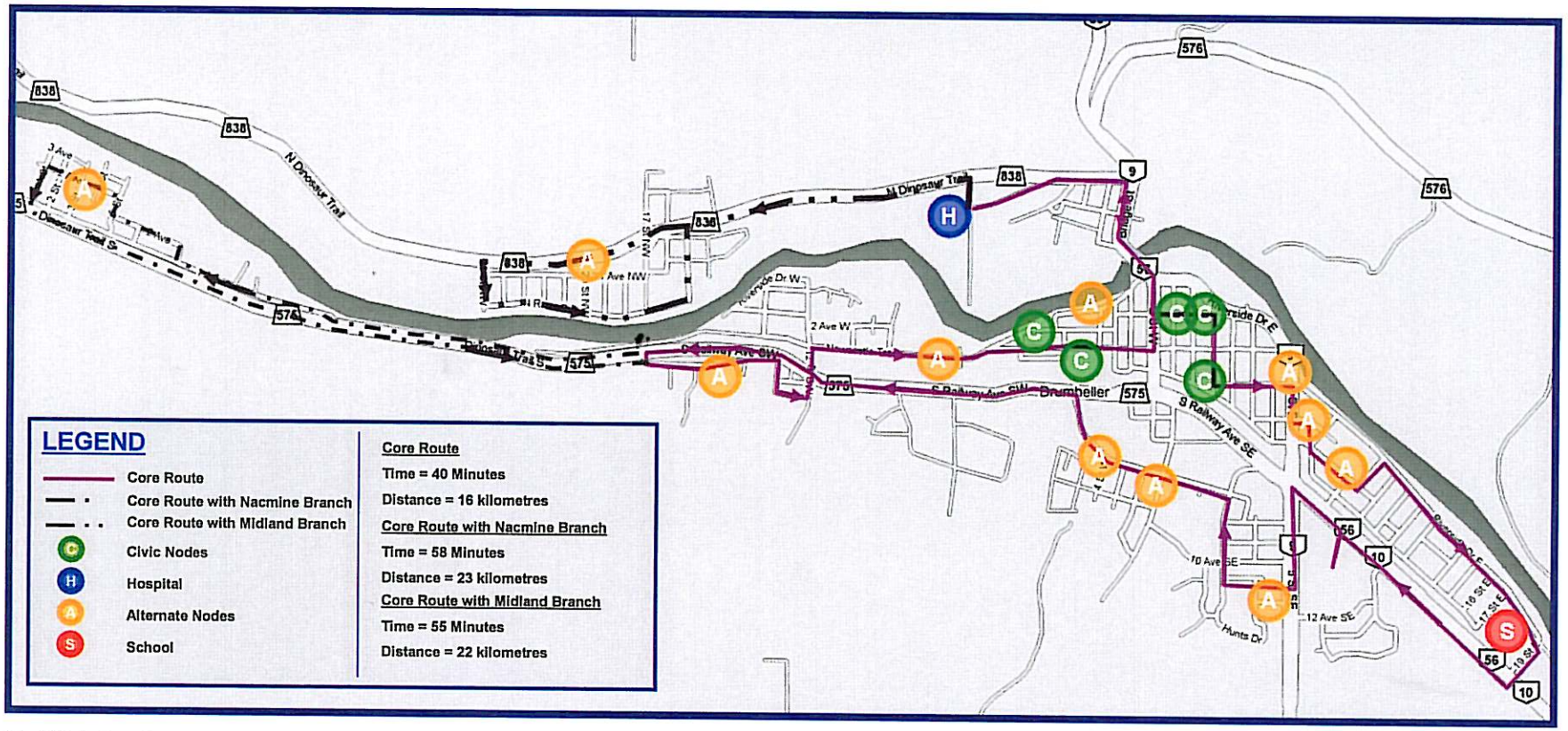

Exhibit 9: Community Bus Routing (Core Route with Midland and Nacmine Branches)

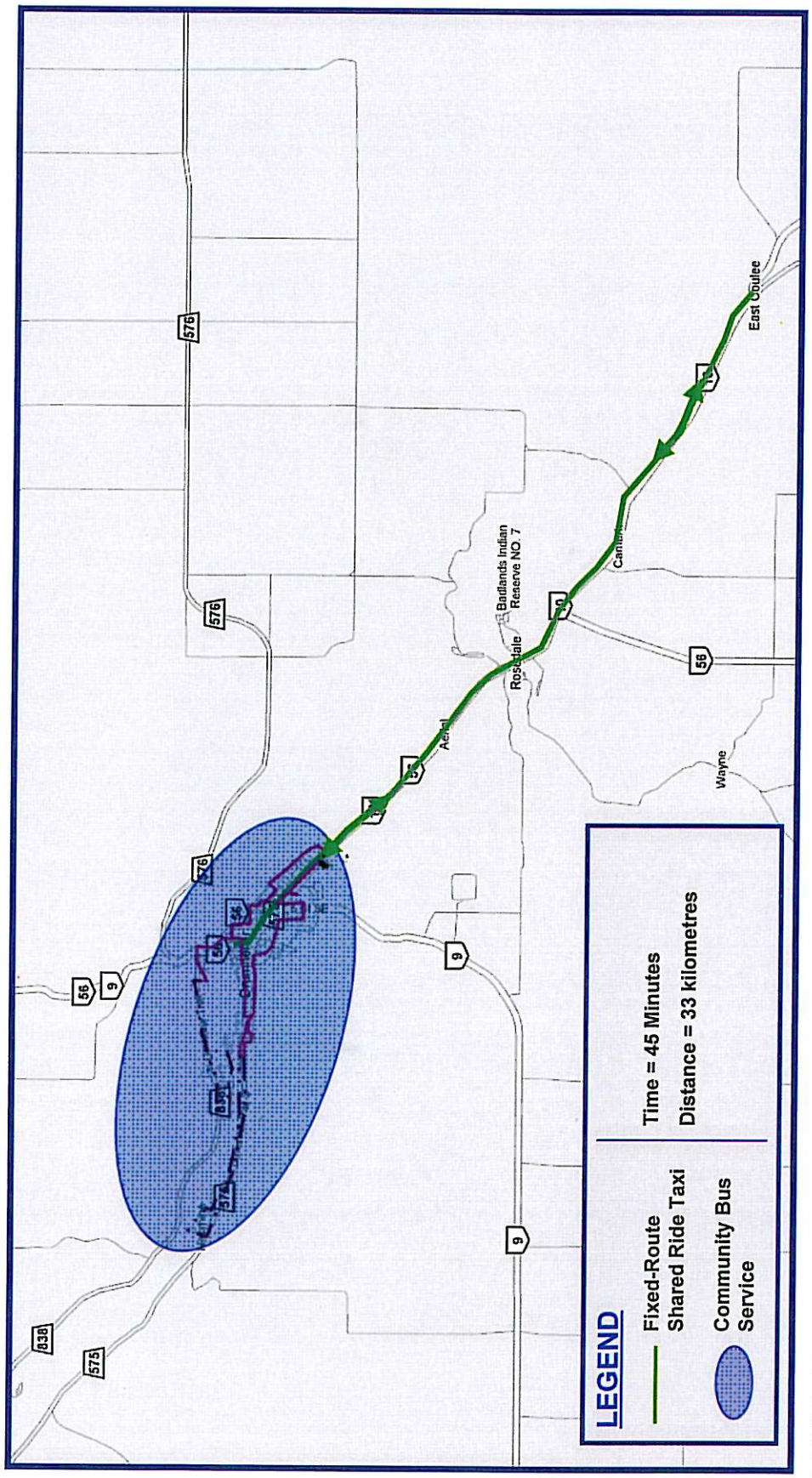

Exhibit 10: Community Bus Routing (East Coulee to Drumheller)

5.4.6 Governance and Administration

Based on stakeholder consultations and an analysis of the requirements of both Valley Bus Society and the Town of Drumheller, the following governance model, as illustrated in **Exhibit 11**, is recommended.

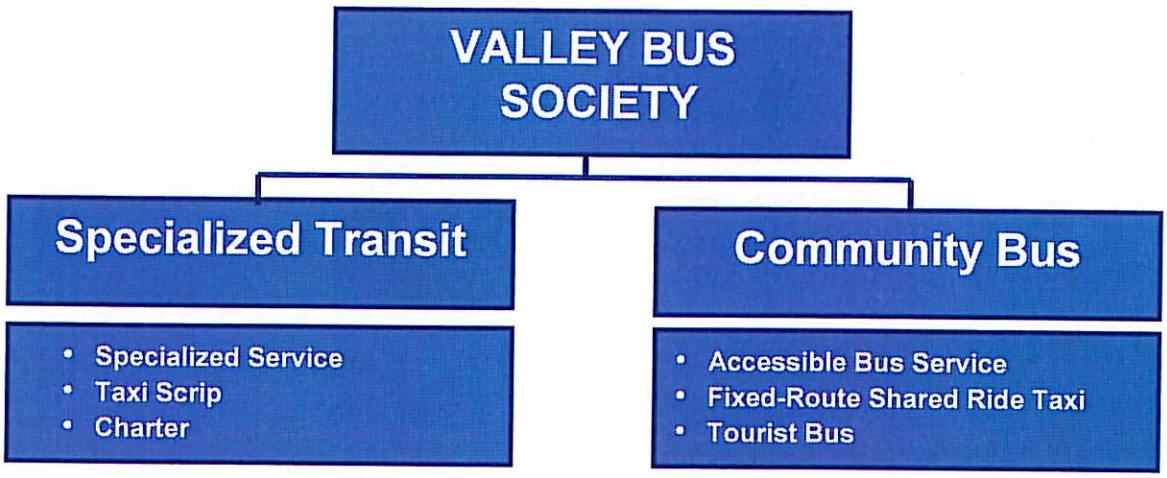

Exhibit 11: Governance Model

Exhibit 11 recommends that the Valley Bus Society be expanded to provide two services: specialized transit and conventional transit. The specialized transit service resembles the current VBS structure and provides three services:

- **Specialized Transit Service**: Similar to the existing VBS service with a modification to the eligibility criteria
- **Taxi Scrip**: As a supplementary service to be provided outside of VBS' operational hours
- **Charter Service:** Similar to the existing medical charter service that operates trips to Calgary

The community bus service would be funded by the Town of Drumheller and delivered by the Valley Bus Society. To ensure that the following three services under the community bus service arm are executed in accordance with the Town's vision and within budget, a liaison between the Town and VBS is required:

- **Community Bus Service**: Fixed-route accessible transit service to be provided on a fixed schedule
- **Fixed-route Shared-ride Taxi**: A low-cost, low capacity service to connect the outlying communities to the Town of Drumheller
- **Tourist Bus:** A service to connect the Town of Drumheller to the Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology in Midland Provincial Park.

To facilitate the changes needed, the following administrative changes are required:

- The Town of Drumheller appoint an existing staff member as an advisor to the VBS and to serve as a liaison from the Finance department between the Town and the VBS
- Two separate budgets be established for the VBS to operate:
  - Specialized transit service, which will be responsible for:
    - Serving those that cannot use Community Bus service due to a disability
    - Out-of town medical trips
    - Taxi scrip
  - Public transit service:
    - Community Bus
    - Shared-ride fixed-route taxis
- Provide two phone lines for the VBS with one phone line dedicated to the VBS dispatching tasks
- Establish a record-keeping process that tracks specialized transit trips
- Revise the eligibility criteria for VBS specialized transit service

5.4.7 Funding

The introduction of a community bus and a separate budget item provides an opportunity for the Town of Drumheller to seek transit capital and operating funding from the Province of Alberta since it would be serve the same purpose as other transit systems in Alberta. Further, by establishing a service that is accessible to all residents, there will be environmental benefits to the community. The Town could also seek funding from Tourism should the community bus or a second dedicated vehicle be used to provide tourist shuttles that can also be used for local business charters.

With respect to provincial funding, there three programs available. They are the:

- **New Deal for Public Transit Program:** This program provides 100% funding for capital purchases, such as accessible buses, to municipally owned public transit systems. The amount of funding is allocated based on the Town's share of all transit ridership in the Province. This means that this program may not be available for start-ups as there is currently no ridership in the Town of Drumheller from a municipally owned public transit system.
- **Alberta Cities Transportation Partnership Program:** This provincial program provides 75% funding for capital purchases, such as buses. The amount of funding is up to $60 per capita, or in the case of Drumheller $485,000. The purchase of one vehicle for $190,000, as identified in the forthcoming section, would mean a capital grant of $142,500 by the province matched with $57,500 from the Town. It seems that this program is available to start-ups.
- **Unconditional Municipal Grant Program:** This program is available to support municipalities without conditions. The funds can be used for capital and operating funding. Although this program provides the greatest freedom in its use, this funding is currently being allocated by the Town for other purposes. Directing these funds to a transit program may leave funding gaps in other areas.

6. SERVICE PLAN

The following section outlines the service plan for Valley Bus Society under the recommended governance model.

6.1 Service Hours

The following section outlines a service plan for the Town of Drumheller between 2010 and 2014.

- **2010**
  - Community Bus (2,000 revenue hours per annum)
    - Monday to Friday 7 hours of service
    - Saturday 3 hours of service
  - Fixed-Route Shared Ride Taxi (500 revenue hour per annum)
    - Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday 3 hours of service per day
  - Specialized Transit (2,000 revenue hour per annum)
    - Monday to Friday service 7 hours of service
    - Saturday service 3 hours of service
- **2011**
  - Community Bus (2,300 revenue hours per annum)
    - Monday to Friday 8 hours of service
    - Saturday 4 hours of service
  - Fixed-Route Shared Ride Taxi (575 revenue hour per annum)
    - Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday 3 hours of service per day
    - Mondays (twice a month) 3 hours of service
  - Specialized Transit (2,300 revenue hour per annum)
    - Monday to Friday service 8 hours of service
    - Saturday service 4 hours of service
- **2012**
  - Community Bus (2,500 revenue hours per annum)
    - Monday to Friday 8 hours of service
    - Saturday 8 hours of service
  - Fixed-Route Shared Ride Taxi (625 revenue hour per annum)
    - Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday 3 hours of service per day
  - Specialized Transit (2,500 revenue hour per annum)
    - Monday to Friday service 8 hours of service
    - Saturday service 8 hours of service
- **2013**
  - Community Bus (2,700 revenue hours per annum)
    - Monday to Friday 8 hours of service
    - Saturday 8 hours of service
    - Sunday 3 hours of service
  - Fixed-Route Shared Ride Taxi (675 revenue hour per annum)

  - Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday 3 hours of service per day
  - Friday (once per month) 3 hours of service per day
- Specialized Transit (2,700 revenue hour per annum)
  - Monday to Friday 8 hours of service
  - Saturday 8 hours of service
  - Sunday 3 hours of service

- **2014**
  - Community Bus (2,900 revenue hours per annum)
    - Monday to Friday 8 hours of service
    - Saturday 8 hours of service
    - Sunday 7 hours of service
  - Fixed-Route Shared Ride Taxi (675 revenue hour per annum)
    - Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday 3 hours of service per day
    - Fridays (twice per month) 3 hours of service per day
  - Specialized Transit (2,900 revenue hour per annum)
    - Monday to Friday 8 hours of service
    - Saturday 8 hours of service
    - Sunday 7 hours of service

6.2 Operating and Capital Costs

It is suggested that an operating plan be developed for the service recommendations of this report, which would be updated on an annual basis. However, given the lack of accurate data, it is difficult to accurately determine how many of the existing trips that customers are taking are attributed to persons that are unable to use a community bus. A number of assumptions are, therefore, provided in the foregoing.

6.2.1 Infrastructure Capital Costs

Capital costs are estimated at:

- $190,000 for a 24-passenger community bus (2010) with a capital reserve equally distributed over 7 years to purchase a replacement vehicle
- $12,000 for a taxi retrofit to accommodate a wheelchair
- $10,000 for additional office equipment and software to track VBS client trips
- $20,000 in 2010 and $10,000 per year for 5 years to install bus stops and shelters

Table 4: Capital Costs (2010-2014)

Capital Cost	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Community Bus	$190,000				
Taxi Retrofit	$12,000				
Equipment/Software	$10,000				
Bus Stops/Shelters	$20,000	$10,000	$10,000	$10,000	$10,000
Capital Reserve (Vehicle)		$27,200	$27,200	$27,200	$27,200
Total	**$232,000**	**$37,200**	**$37,200**	**$37,200**	**$37,200**

6.2.2 Operating Costs

Community Bus
The peer review median value for conventional transit is $60 per hour. Unfortunately, the current hourly cost to operate the VBS service is not available and as such, a figure of $50 per hour has been used for budgeting purposes. As a check, the small Town of Midland, Ontario currently operates service at a cost of $50 per hour for a small heavy-duty community bus (9.4 metre/ 31 foot).

Fixed-route Shared-ride Taxi
Assume the cost of fixed route shared ride taxi service is $40 per hour.

Specialized Transit
For specialized transit, which uses a smaller more fuel efficient vehicle and has lower operating costs, it is assumed to approximate $40 per hour. Based on the number of community bus service hours, the annual cost would approximate $80,000 per year.

Out of Town Medical Trips
There is insufficient data to determine the cost of out of town charters for medical trips; however, it can be assumed that the costs charged would exceed the cost to provide the service. For budget estimating purposes, the medical charter costs have been considered a break even proposition at a minimum and any additional revenues received would be used to expand hours of operation within the community.

In-town Tourist Bus
For budget estimating purposes, the Tourist Bus is considered be a break even proposition at a minimum and any additional revenues received would be also used to expand hours of operation within the community.

Other - Administration Costs
For budget estimating purposes, an estimate of 10% of the transportation expenses was added to reflect additional expenses that may be realized through additional staff wages or the need for part time staff to handle customer inquiries and information or to assist on the day to day reporting activities and accounting requirements. It is recommended that this be reassessed after 6 months of service.

6.2.3 Customer Demand and Revenue

The demand for specialized transit service will be based on the approximate peer group median value of:

- 0.03 registrants per capita (0.03 x 8,000 = 240 residents
- 20 trips per eligible resident annual (20 x 240 = 4,800 trips per year)
- Average revenue per one-way trip would be $4.00 for door-to-door service with attendants riding for free within town

The immediate demand for the community bus service would be the current demand for VBS service less the estimated specialized transit service demand for VBS service:

- 24,000 passengers less 4,200 VBS passengers = 20,000 passengers (rounded to nearest 1,000)
- 95% of the demand will be within the urban area of Drumheller and Nasmine (19,000)
- The average fare to ride the community bus service is assumed to be $2.50 while 10% (1,000) would come from outside the Drumheller urban area and Nasmine, paying a fare of $5.00 for the fixed route shared-ride taxi program

In order to estimate the future demand for the community bus service, the peer review median value is 14 annual trips per capita but ranges from 0.5 to 20 trips per capita. The current estimated demand is less than 3 trips per capita. Since the community bus service will be available to all residents, an estimate of 3.5 trips per capita will be used for budgeting purposes for the second year of the service and grow by 0.25 trips per capita until 2014. This figure can be updated as the community bus service is marketed and matures.

In terms of existing grants and funding, it has been assumed that these funds would continue to subsidize the cost of the new VBS dedicated service as well as funding for seniors to use the community bus service.

Table 5: Operating Costs (2010-2014)

	Operating Costs	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
CONVENTIONAL TRANSIT	**Community Bus**					
	Service Hours	2,000	2,300	2,500	2,700	2,900
	Transportation Expenses	$100,000	$115,000	$125,000	$135,000	$145,000
	Administration Expenses	$10,000	$11,500	$12,500	$13,500	$14,500
	Total Expenses	**$110,000**	**$126,500**	**$137,500**	**$148,500**	**$159,500**
	Ridership	20,000	28,423	30,597	32,791	35,005
	Revenue	$50,000	$71,059	$76,494	$81,978	$87,513
	Total Revenue	**$50,000**	**$71,059**	**$76,494**	**$81,978**	**$87,513**
	Net Cost	**$60,000**	**$55,441**	**$61,006**	**$66,522**	**$71,987**
	Fixed-Route Shared-Ride Taxi					
	Service Hours	500	575	625	675	725
	Transportation Expenses	$20,000	$23,000	$25,000	$27,000	$29,000
	Administration Expenses	$2,000	$2,300	$2,500	$2,700	$2,900
	Total Expenses	**$22,000**	**$25,300**	**$27,500**	**$29,700**	**$31,900**
	Ridership	1,000	1,294	1,563	1,856	2,175
	Revenue	$5,000	$6,469	$7,813	$9,281	$10,875
	Total Revenue	**$5,000**	**$6,469**	**$7,813**	**$9,281**	**$10,875**
	Net Cost	**$17,000**	**$18,831**	**$19,688**	**$20,419**	**$21,025**
SPECIALIZED TRANSIT	**Specialized Transit**					
	Service Hours	2,000	2,300	2,500	2,700	2,900
	Transportation Expenses	$80,000	$92,000	$100,000	$108,000	$116,000
	Administration Expenses	$8,000	$9,200	$10,000	$10,800	$11,600
	Total Expenses	**$88,000**	**$101,200**	**$110,000**	**$118,800**	**$127,600**
	Ridership	4,850	4,873	4,896	4,919	4,942
	Revenue	$19,399	$19,490	$19,582	$19,675	$19,768
	Total Revenue	**$19,399**	**$19,490**	**$19,582**	**$19,675**	**$19,768**
	Net Cost	**$68,601**	**$81,710**	**$90,418**	**$99,125**	**$107,832**
	Taxi Scrip					
	Service Hours	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Transportation Expenses	$9,700	$9,745	$9,791	$9,837	$9,884
	Administration Expenses	$970	$975	$979	$984	$988
	Total Expenses	**$10,670**	**$10,720**	**$10,770**	**$10,821**	**$10,872**
	Ridership	970	975	979	984	988
	Revenue	$4,850	$4,873	$4,896	$4,919	$4,942
	Total Revenue	**$4,850**	**$4,873**	**$4,896**	**$4,919**	**$4,942**
	Net Cost	**$5,820**	**$5,847**	**$5,875**	**$5,902**	**$5,930**
	Total					
	Service Hours	4,500	5,175	5,625	6,075	6,525
	Transportation Expenses	$209,700	$239,745	$259,791	$279,837	$299,884
	Administration Expenses	$20,970	$23,975	$25,979	$27,984	$29,988
	Total Expenses	**$230,670**	**$263,720**	**$285,770**	**$307,821**	**$329,872**
	Ridership	26,820	35,564	38,035	40,550	43,111
	Revenue	$79,249	$101,890	$108,784	$115,853	$123,098
	Grants and Donations	$14,000	$14,700	$15,435	$16,207	$17,017
	Total Revenue/Grants/Donations	**$93,249**	**$116,590**	**$124,219**	**$132,060**	**$140,115**
	Net Cost (excluding municipality)	**$137,421**	**$147,129**	**$161,551**	**$175,761**	**$189,757**
	Population	8,083	8,121	8,159	8,198	8,237
	Net Cost per Capita	**$17.00**	**$18.12**	**$19.80**	**$21.44**	**$23.04**

7. SUMMARY

Below is a summary of the study findings, recommendations and next steps.

7.1 Summary of Findings

The Service Plan addressed a number of objectives:

- Identified the community need for public transit (e.g. employees, students, seniors, etc.)
- Addressed both conventional transit and specialized (mobility) transit needs and how they are being met today, gaps and opportunities
- Identified appropriate vehicles and service levels required to meet the demand
- Determine route and service design (hours of operation, route travelways, etc.)
- Identified low-cost methods of service delivery, where appropriate
- Development of a service plan that is fiscally responsible
- Identified a number of external funding initiatives

7.2 Recommendations

It is recommended that the Town of Drumheller approve, in principal:

- Support the community bus route and fixed route shared ride taxi service
- Commitment of the appropriate operating funds to initiate service in 2010
- The purchase of one 24 passenger community bus for $190,000
- The retrofit of a taxi for $12,000
- The proposed Five-Year Financial Plan
- Support for operation of the community bus service by VBS
- The appointment of a city staff member to be the liaison for transit-related initiatives

7.3 Next Steps

Upon approval of the recommendations, the next steps anticipated are:

- Investigate external Provincial and Federal funding to purchase the vehicles and other infrastructure needed to start up and maintain service
- Enter into discussions with VBS to operate the service and finalize the operating costs for budgeting purposes
- Present the findings of this report to the public at an open house and to finalize the proposed service