



Highway 16 Action Plan Advisory Group

Ministry of Transportation – Aleza Boardroom

4th Floor - 1011 4th Avenue, Prince George

Friday, January 15, 2016

10:30am – 1:30pm

Conference Call Information: [REDACTED] – Participant ID [REDACTED]

These minutes are considered to be complete and correct. Please advise the writer of any error or omissions, otherwise these minutes will be considered to be an accurate record of the discussions.

Chair:

Deborah Bowman, Assistant Deputy Minister – Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure

Members:

Penny Anguish, Chief Nursing Executive & Chief Operating Officer – Northwest Health Services (*by phone*)

Shane Brienen, Mayor - District of Houston

Wanda Good, Deputy Chief Council - Gitanyow Band

Richard Jock, Chief Operating Officer - First Nations Health Authority (*by phone*)

Carol Leclerc, Mayor - City of Terrace

Rob MacDougall, Mayor - District of Fort St. James (*sent regrets*)

Reg Mueller, Saik'uz First Nation

Luke Strimbold, Mayor - Village of Burns Lake

Mary Teegee, Executive Director - Carrier Sekani Family Services (*sent regrets*)

Steve Raper, Chief Communications Officer, Northern Health

Ministry of Transportation Staff in attendance:

Ron Marshall, District Manager - Fort George District Office

Scott Maxwell, Regional Director - Northern Region

Darrell Gunn, District Manager – Skeena District Office

Jodi Newnham, Senior Manager - Aboriginal Relations

Carl Lutz, District Manager – Bulkley-Stikine District (*by phone*)

Kevin Volk, Executive Director - Transit and Crown Agency Policy

Guest:

Kevin Schubert, Director – Regional Transit Systems BC Transit

Scribe:

Melanie Robbestad, Regional Management Administrator, Ministry of Transportation

Meeting Commenced at 10:30am

Welcome and Introductions – Deborah Bowman

- Recognize meeting taking place on traditional Lheidli T'enneh territory
- Thank you for making your way here and giving your time for the advisory
- Regrets from Rob MacDougall & Mary Teegee

Review Agenda – Deborah Bowman

- Review the key components of the action plan announced by Minister Todd Stone on December 14, 2015
- Confidential/Draft of presentation – not for distribution
- Review agenda
- Request for additional agenda items – no additions made

Transit Expansion *DISCUSSION* – Kevin Volk

- Introductions
 - Kevin Volk – Executive Director – Transit and Crown Agency Policy
 - Kevin Schubert, Director – Regional Transit Systems BC Transit
- Commitment of \$1.6 million over 2 years for transit expansion
 - These funds will be available on a cost-shared basis with local communities to extend or enhance BC Transit
- BC Transit is the only service of its kind in Canada where there's a provincial agency to cost share with municipalities. This model has enabled communities across the province to have access to transit that normally would not.
- Types of systems
 - Conventional transit system
 - Custom/Paratransit system
- Discussion on BC Transit Service vs Community Model – which is more suitable
- Discussion on ways to connect every community along the Highway 16 corridor
 - Northern Health Connections already provides service along the entire corridor
 - BC Transit provides some regular service in some places
 - Challenge is to see where opportunities to expand or to provide BC Transit services
- The ministry has worked closely with BC Transit to draft potential BC Transit services that would mirror the services that are already provided – discussion pursued
 - Different/additional routes
 - Prioritizing for the most need
 - Northern Health Connections service
 - Greyhound bus service
 - Schedules (commuter vs daytime) and fares
 - Public information strategy

ACTION: Mayors to bring this information forward to their counterparts in the Municipalities, Regional Districts and First Nations communities to discuss preferences and bring back to the next advisory meeting, February 3rd a decision as to what they would like to see or consider with regards to cost sharing, as well as routes, schedules, fares, etc. Important to note the ministry does not want to impose anything, this is a proposal for a partnership and if a community chooses not to participate the unused transit funds can be moved over to the community transportation grant initiative.

Discussion regarding availability of Ministry staff for discussion with Hwy 16 corridor Mayors attending Natural Resource “Round Up” conference in Prince George on Wednesday, January 20th.

Community Transportation Grants to Purchase and Operate Community Vehicles DISCUSSION
– Deborah Bowman

- The ministry is committed to provide up to \$750,000 in funding over 3 years for new or expanded services
 - Can carry over year to year, perhaps more funding for first year, however, limit is \$750,000 for three years
 - Cost-shared grants will be available to cover a percentage of the purchase price for community-based vehicles
 - Cost-shared grants will be available to cover up a percentage of the operating costs, including vehicle maintenance, fuel and insurance
 - Operational funding is also available to support existing vehicles, but the vehicles must be providing new or expanded services
 - Would like to see new or expansion to programs
- This initiative was inspired by Fort St James’ Seniors Helping Seniors program

ACTION: Ask Mayor MacDougall to present to the Advisory Group at the February 3rd meeting

- Questions/discussion
 - What would be a fair cost share for this service?
 - Percentage to purchase a vehicle? Provide funding on annual basis? Cost share for operating? Support existing operations?
 - Primarily this program is to assist communities to help their citizens where they can tap into other existing services
 - Support inter-connectivity between transportation modes (Northern Health Connections, Greyhound, Via Rail)
 - Take citizens to a neighbouring community
 - Perhaps a shopping transportation service
 - Is there an opportunity to partner with the private sector (employers/industry, car dealerships, BC Transit for economy of scale)?
 - There could be interest from other partners that would support the community in able to help their service
- Looking to this Advisory Group to determine the criteria of this application based program
 - Desire is to make the process easy and accountable
 - What should the criteria be?
 - What would be a fair cost share model?
 - How long should the grant application process be open for?
 - Requesting representation from the Advisory Group to be on the committee that would make decisions as to who would be receiving these funds
 - Province would be administering this process through the Policy and Programs branch at MoTI

ACTION: The Advisory Group to come to next meeting February 3, 2016 prepared to discuss these questions.

First Nations Driver Education Program DISCUSSION – Deborah Bowman

- During the ministry's meeting with First Nations and municipal leaders, feedback was received indicating there is a shortage of qualified drivers
- Drivers licences are important to support community activities, but they are essential in rural areas where travel is required to access recreation, social activities, appointments, or even purchase groceries, they can also support access to employment opportunities
- The ministry heard that in some instances communities had access to vans, but also faced a shortage of drivers with the appropriate driver's licences
- In response, the ministry initiated a program with the Carrier Sekani Family Services to develop and deliver a program to provide driver training specifically for First Nations members
- A number of benefits for individuals holding a valid driver's license including independence and opportunities to drive the vehicles of the organization for which they work
- The ministry has allocated \$150,000 over 3 years to support this driver training program by various means
- Must ensure the process meets provincial commitment to fair and open public sector procurement, including competition, value for money, accountability and fairness
 - Sole Source Contract
 - Offer the funding to existing driver training schools
 - Request for Proposals process
- Looking to the Advisory Group to determine details for determining factors

ACTION: Report from Carrier Sekani Family Services to be shared with the Advisory Group at February 3rd meeting. At that time, the ministry would be looking for advice from the Advisory Group for this program.

- Questions/discussion
 - Would driving trainers go to the people for training, rather than the people come to them
 - Would there be stipulations on who could take the training or would it be eligible to everyone
 - Would there be specifics for eligibility or other barriers
 - Look into the Misty Isles Economic Development for possible partnership opportunities
 - Concern that if there was only one contract, it would not cover the entire corridor
 - Ministry proposes issuing an Request for Proposals to a qualified service provider
 - Perhaps allocate a certain amount to all areas, dividing three ways – remembering economy of scale, perhaps one contract, with stipulations that it must cover the entire corridor
 - Questions regarding graduated licensing and opportunities to shorten the time required or adding a work phase that would provide a quicker license process to drive to and from or for work

ACTION: The Advisory Group is to provide information regarding any existing programs in your communities and perhaps find out what barriers they may have come up against and any other thoughts or information at the February 3rd meeting.

WORKING LUNCH – break for lunch 12:15-1:235pm

- Wanda Good had to leave the meeting for another commitment
- Penny Anguish had to leave the call for another commitment

Highway Infrastructure Safety Improvements, Including Webcams and Transit Shelters

DISCUSSION – Scott Maxwell

- The ministry received feedback there were not enough safe and comfortable places to wait for transit or rides
- The ministry has access to \$500,000K over 2 years that can include transit shelters, rideshare shelters, webcams and on a trial basis, increased lighting and WiFi
- The ministry's objective is to connect rural communities with local service centers and to provide safe, comfortable locations for people to wait for transit or arrange rideshare opportunities
- High level map of draft proposed improvements presented
 - Most transit shelters are in main service centres
 - Ride share shelters are in smaller communities or along the corridor
 - Looking for advice from the Advisory Group as to whether these locations would meet people's needs
 - Do we need more shelters, less webcams?
 - Cost is dependent on location and what type of shelter
 - More locations could be added if the shelters were scaled back
- Discussion
 - Webcams provide photos only, not video
 - Quality of photos, and what could be captured
 - Primary goal is to dissuade negative situations
 - Technology and applications being developed by third parties
 - Possible emergency telephones at these locations

Collaboration to Increase Interconnectivity of Services DISCUSSION – Kevin Volk and Steve Raper

- It was determined in December that a working group at the Senior level between our ministry, Northern Health, BC Transit and First Nations Health Authority would be created to look at the existing services along the Highway 16 corridor, where Northern Health Connections, BC Transit services and First Nations services were offered and where there could be greater engagement with communities and to realize efficiencies of all these services combined.
- Map provided illustrating the current services along the corridor
 - The Northern Health Connections service along the Highway 16 corridor constitutes only about one third of their service in BC and is very scheduled. There are set times and stops, and it is built around health care travel.
 - Northern Health is compiling data as to who is moving where and why, which community to which community and ridership capacity. They are currently analyzing this information.
 - Health care travel definition is broad and covers physiotherapy, dental, diagnostic, specialist or even physician appointments
- At this time, the working group is just starting the conversations about how the agencies can work together.
- More information regarding the progress of this working group will be presented at the next Advisory Group meeting February 3rd.

- Discussion
 - Driver Training
 - Detailed Map
 - Public awareness
 - Connecting the First Nations communities to the Highway 16 services
 - Identifying opportunities for coordination of services
- NOTE: Community Web Portal has been created out of meetings held in 2014 around Highway 16 Community Transportation
 - Access available <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/transportation/passenger-travel/highway-16-community-access>
 - Focuses on the region and has every community mapped, every available transit opportunity, and shows information regarding taxi, CN Rail, Northern Health Connections, BC Transit, etc.

Next Steps & Action Items – Deborah Bowman

- Discussion that this is still a work in progress, the Advisory Group met today to work on the details from the announcement from December, when there is more definitive direction, the detailed action plan will be announced.
- The contact information for members (and staff) of Advisory Group to be distributed early next week, along with the minutes of this meeting.
- Deborah Bowman thanked everyone again for their engagement and commitment and giving up so much of their time. She stated that we (the ministry) know it's a lot to ask and understands that it is a busy time, but it is important that we continue the momentum that we have built, and get to some really positive outcomes We are hopeful that partnerships will start to grow because of this and will continue our dialogue with the federal government.
- Next meeting is scheduled on February 3, 2016 in Prince George.

ACTION: Please let Deborah Bowman or her staff know regarding support or attendance in person or conference call for Wednesday, January 20th in Prince George, or what can be done to support.

ACTION: Mayors and First Nations representatives to bring this information forward to their counterparts in the Municipalities, Regional Districts and First Nations communities to discuss and bring back to the next Advisory Group meeting, February 3rd.

- Thanks and appreciation to all of you that were able to attend and to the local ministry staff for hosting today

Meeting adjourned at 1:50pm