



Highway 16 Action Plan Advisory Group

Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure

Conference Call

Wednesday, July 19, 2017

11:00 am – Noon

Conference Call Information: Dial in # [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:

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

Members:

Rob MacDougall, Mayor – District of Fort St. James
Shane Brienens, Mayor – District of Houston
Taylor Bachrach, Mayor – Smithers
Reg Mueller, Saik'uz First Nation
Maureen Hailey for Steve Raper, Chief Communications Officer, Northern Health
John Mah, Vice President, First Nations Benefits, First National Health Authority (*regrets*)
Joseph Bevan, Chief Kitselas First Nation (*regrets*)
Mary Teegee, Executive Director – Carrier Sekani Family Services (*regrets*)
Richard Jock, Chief Operating Officer – First Nations Health Authority (*regrets*)
Carol Leclerc, Mayor – City of Terrace (*regrets*)

Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure staff:

Reg Faubert, Manager, Policy and Programs
Scott Maxwell, Regional Director, Northern Region
Linda Harmon, Director, Partnerships Department

Guest:

Chris Fudge – Regional Transit Manager, BC Transit

Meeting Commenced at 11:05 am

Welcome – Review Agenda/Last Meeting Minutes – Reg Faubert

- Regional District Bulkley-Nechako Community to Community Forum took place on June 28, 2017 in Fort Fraser. Progress on the Highway 16 Action Plan was acknowledged and appreciated by those in attendance.

ACTION: Minutes from the last meeting, March 9, 2017 will be re-sent to all members.

Update on Community Vehicle Grant Program – Reg Faubert

- \$2 million in community vehicle grants will be shared between 12 successful applicants – for vehicle purchase and 3 years of operational funding.
- Process – once the recipient has quotes in place and a decision has been made on the vehicle to purchase, agreements will be completed.
 - A cheque/direct deposit will be provided for the provincial share of the vehicle purchase cost and the first six months of operational support, based on the estimate included in the application.
 - Recipients will provide reports quarterly on actual operational costs.
 - Each six months, a cheque for the ongoing operational support will be issued.
- There are 12 recipients that represent coverage throughout the corridor – going west to east, they are: (1) the Friendship House Association of Prince Rupert, (2) Gingolx Village, (3) Kermodie Friendship Society based in Terrace, (4) Gitanyow Health, (5) Gitanmaax Band, (6) Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre based in Smithers, (7) Granisle, (8) Takla Lake, (9) Nee Tahi Buhn, (10) Binche Keyoh Bu Society, (11) Fraser Lake, and (12) Vanderhoof-Saik'uz.
- The first two agreements are in place with Granisle and the Dze L K'ant Friendship Society in Smithers. The Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure is in the process of issuing cheques.
- Vanderhoof – Saik'uz have purchased their bus and service began on July 10, 2017. Reg Mueller reported that the service is working well.

Update on First Nations Driver Education – Reg Faubert

- The Highway 16 Transportation Action Plan committed a total of \$300,000 for two years of First Nations Driver Training. Carrier Sekani was awarded the contract for the first year and have been actively identifying and recruiting students for the graduated driver's licence through to Class 4 licensing. Three hundred prospective students have been identified. Classes have been offered in a number of Highway 16 communities, including: Saik'uz, Nak'adzli, Yekooche, TI'azt'en, Takla, Nadleh, Burns Lake, Cheslatta, Lake Babine, Wet'suwet'en, Skin Tyee.

Update on Collaboration Working Group – Reg Faubert

- This group includes representatives from Northern Health Connections, First Nations Health Authority, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations, and Rural Development. The ideal outcome is that residents are aware of all the options for travel and that the different transportations systems work together so that wherever possible people can make connections.

Transit Shelters and Webcams Update – Scott Maxwell

- Three all-weather transit shelters were recently installed, one each in Burns Lake, Houston and Topley.
- It has been noted that a number of people are using bikes to get to the transit stops, so bike racks are being considered for locations where there is a perceived need.
- Two traveller's shelters are being discussed for the Vanderhoof-Saik'uz Community Shuttle service. Reg Mueller suggested one be located at Nechako Avenue and Highway 16.
- At the Moricetown Gas Bar transit shelter a webcam will be installed once the new cell tower is operational.

- A new transit shelter will be installed in Kitsumkalum.
- Mayor Bachrach asked if webcams could be located at two locations in Smithers which are commonly used by hitchhikers.

ACTION: Scott Maxwell committed to discussing this with his staff.

BC Transit – Chris Fudge

- The Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako new transit service launch event occurred on June 16, 2017 in Burns Lake. It attracted local and national media. The service began on June 19.
- In the first two weeks, ridership was 60 percent on the Burns Lake–Prince George route, and 40 percent between Burns Lake and Smithers. BC Transit is in a monitoring phase. A debrief is scheduled for early August to review operations.
- Scheduling and timing for the service is being affected by construction on Highway 16. BC Transit has been receiving customer feedback primarily through its website.
- The new transit service segment between Hazelton and Terrace will be three days per week. Regional District Kitimat-Stikine is working with communities which will benefit from the new service to get partnership commitments.

ACTION: BC Transit will provide links to video footage of the RDBN launch event, media coverage and article in the most recent Canadian Urban Transportation Association magazine.

Roundtable

- Mayor Bachrach shared that he has been hearing from people who are disappointed that the bus service from Smithers does not go directly to Terrace and Prince George.
- It would be good if there were some direct marketing material and would like BC Transit to provide something that could be handed out.
- Maureen Hailey reported that ridership on the Northern Health Connections bus system is stable. The route to Vancouver has been temporarily suspended due to the forest fire road closures.

Next Steps

- Actions and Minutes will be circulated which will include links to the BC Transit media coverage of the new RDBN transit service.
- Members will be canvassed with respect to the next meeting date.