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Notes of Meeting

Date of Meeting: June 25, 2009

Project Number: 6595-024-00-01 Time: 10:00am – 2:30pm

Project Name: **Bow Valley Regional Transit Authority**

Location: Banff Rocky Mountain Resort Hotel and Conference Centre, Banff, Alberta.

Regarding: Task Force Meeting

Attendees:

Cheryl Hyde	representing	Town of Banff
Bill Lambert	representing	AECOM
Darren Reeder	representing	Hotel-Motel Association
Jeannie DeValois	representing	Alberta Municipal Affairs
Brian Marcotte	representing	AECOM
Ian Mackie	representing	I.D. #9
Wayne Lilley	representing	Alberta Transportation
Shannon O'Donovan	representing	Banff Engineering
Mike Murtha	representing	Parks Canada
John Stutz	representing	Mayor of Banff
Dave Schebek	representing	I.D. #9
Phil Dack	representing	AECOM
Kevin Van Vliet	representing	Canmore Engineering
Cordelia Crockett	representing	AECOM
Mark Yawney	representing	Banff Airporter
Ladd Snowsell	representing	Mt Norquay/Lake Louise/Sunshine Ski Areas
Carlos Garcia (UTSB)	representing	Environmental Groups
Jack Scissons	representing	AECOM

Distribution: Ron Casey, Mayor of Canmore
Ron Stonier, Tourism Canmore
Robert Earl, Town of Banff
Kim Durdle, Alberta Transportation
Mike Dove, Brewster

PLEASE NOTE: This is not a verbatim account of everything said in this meeting. It is a brief summary of the key points as transcribed by Cordelia Crockett and Jack Scissons. These email addresses and telephone numbers have not been verified for their accuracy. The PowerPoint agenda and the issues/opportunities discussion outline are attached. If there are any omissions, please advise, otherwise we will assume the contents to be correct.

Bill Lambert introduced the purpose of the meeting, namely to ensure that there was agreement among the Steering Committee on the key foundational points for creating a Bow Valley Regional Transit Commission using the memorandum agreement as a starting point; report on the key points of the recent meeting with Municipal Affairs; document and discuss the dimensions and opinions regarding the key outstanding issues and opportunities; discuss how to obtain a wider input from affected or interested parties; and finally discuss future project directions.

Foundation Areas

1. Brian Marcotte mentioned the uniqueness of this endeavour. It was breaking new ground in Alberta, as a public-private partnership has neither been tried nor approved before for a regional services commission. The previous focus on such agreements pertaining to services commissions has been related to utilities. He indicated that this project would require a set of regulations, a bylaw and a business plan. The business plan should address both capital and operating expenses and be comprised of a) a vision and mission statement, b) why the transit authority was created, with advantages, c) an explanation of the transition from what exists today to what will be phased in, d) the transfer of assets and management, e) key stages of growth, planned and financed, f) organization and structure and g) capital budgets and operating costs.
2. Discussion on membership followed. Ski areas, the accommodation sector (resorts/hotels/motels), and municipalities were thought to be the main players as directors. Some thought that the business community (retail stores) would not initially be directors. Without the inclusion of businesses, the existing bus operators would be excluded. Anyone who pays fees or taxes or contributes a material amount that is used to fund transit services should be represented.
3. Parks Canada should be involved in some capacity, and its financial contribution should be encouraged as it derives a lot of benefits from high quality transit service within the national park.
4. Financial contributions should relate to the benefits received as determined by a new formula based on various factors (e.g. kms/hrs/ridership/other factors).
5. Preference is for transit service to be delivered by a competitive private sector.
6. Cost recovery: The Steering Committee decided that the costs of operating the transit system would be covered by subsidies and grants and minimally by fares. They are wary of raising property taxes for transit, especially if it is for the benefit of tourists. Funding for the administration may need to be different than for operating costs.
7. Property tax contributions should be kept to a minimum.
8. Any member of the Transit Authority can provide another transit service outside the BVRTSC plan, but with no contribution from the BVRTSC (in other words 100% at their own cost) and with the approval of the BVRTSC.
9. Various other benefits to improving transit services in Bow Valley were discussed and it was felt that these might be stressed in the business case. They included the environmental benefits, the better customer service (e.g. meeting the expectations of European visitors who assume

that there are ample transit services in a place like Banff), and improved usage of existing services.

Membership of the Governing Body

10. It was put forward that the membership should include the three municipalities (Banff, Canmore and Improvement District #9) (1 rep each), the ski areas (1 rep), and lodging (hotel/motel) (1 rep). Those with a pecuniary interest such as the transportation companies should not be on the committee, but should be sought out for advice and should be informed of committee activity and decisions. Parks Canada and the UTSB should also have an advisory role on the committee, at least.

Sources of Funding

11. Short-term funding sources such as user fees were discussed and included funds/contributions from resorts/hotels/motels, businesses, hotel room rates, direct cash contributions by municipalities, Federal/Provincial grants, and parking fees.
12. Potential longer-term sources included a gas tax, a sales tax, park fees, parking fees and a vehicle levy (i.e., additional special fee annually for vehicle registration). Brian Marcotte suggested that the chances of obtaining approval for a provincial sales tax were remote and that obtaining gas taxes may be difficult, even though Calgary and Edmonton benefit from the Provincial gas tax. Increasing parking fees is under consideration in the Town of Banff, but the administration of it may reduce monies for transit. The concept of having the Bow Valley receive a special tourism designation from the Alberta government as is done with the Resort Municipality of Whistler was also discussed as a possible means of getting special transit funding. This concept will be researched and pursued. It was recognized that funding from senior levels of government was attractive because it would lessen the difficulty of developing cost-sharing mechanisms.
13. After a lengthy discussion on both the short- and long-term funding sources (items 11 & 12), there was no conclusion on what is needed to secure long-term funding. There was, however, an agreement that the parties should continue to work together with AECOM leadership to obtain longer term funding sources as well as pursue other efficiencies that could make this entity work.
14. The question arose asking if the hotel/motel association could commit to long-term (5-10 year) funding plans as municipalities can. The municipalities would not want to carry the burden of an under-funded transit system if players like the hotel/motel association could not guarantee their funding in the long term. It was agreed that the hotel/motel association would likely be able to make this commitment, but with protection clauses as in any funding agreement.
15. Parks Canada receives its funding from Federal appropriations and park fees (gate and camping fees), but sees environmental and visitor benefits from the implementation of the transit authority (e.g. it would not have to build more parking areas if more people took transit into the Park). It intends to participate in the governance and financing of the regional transit services commission to the extent that it can given existing Federal and Provincial legislation and regulations. It has committed to using the funds it receives from gate fees for improvements within the park, and given catch-up with capital reinvestment in recent years and stimulus funding, there may be extra funding available. Therefore, it might be able to assist financially, perhaps in purchasing buses. Parks Canada raises between $17 and 18 million a year at the East Gate of Banff National Park, and these funds are shared with neighbouring parks and typically used for maintenance of roads, toilets, etc. Its current park entrance fee structure has been frozen for two years. Parks Canada has some legislation and regulation limitations in being involved financially and is working through these issues.

Transit Priorities

16. The tourist industry and the public and private bus systems are the priority of this transit service. Canmore has examined the concept of initiating local transit services through a recent review; local transit service implementation is not being pursued now but would be likely pursued in the next five years.
17. The group agreed that the priorities for future service expansion in order were:

    - improved services to the three ski areas
    - regular transit service connecting Canmore and Banff
    - extensions of the Canmore – Banff regional service by connecting it to Lake Louise
    - enhancements to the local transit service in Banff
    - introduction of local transit service in Canmore
    - transit service to some popular camping and hiking destinations in Bow Valley

18. For transit services connecting the Bow Valley area to be successful, tourists need to believe that the transit service is better than travelling by private automobile. This would require a significant marketing campaign both inside and outside the Bow Valley.
19. The ski areas are on record that they will commit $1,000,000 towards same or improved ski bus service.

Dissemination of Project Information

- Project website-newsletter
- Open houses when the information is more concrete
- Media updates
- Tourist Associations (Banff-Lake Louise & Canmore) emails and newsletters

NEXT STEPS

Draft regulation, bylaw and business plan outline for committee review and discussion.

Next meeting: To be determined; most likely either July 23 or 24, 2009

Notes taken by: Jack Scissons and Cordelia Crockett