



May 17, 2019

Town to discontinue Bus Service

At its May 13th meeting, Council for the Town of Pincher Creek approved the recommendation from the Transportation Committee to discontinue the scheduled bus service effective May 31st.

The bus, signage and bus shelters were purchased through a partnership grant from the Federal and Provincial governments (Public Transit Infrastructure Fund and Green Transit Incentives Program). It is widely recognized that public transit contributes to economic growth, the reduction of air pollution, the creation of “inclusive communities”, and accessibility to public services and job opportunities.

The initial operating deficit for the Town Bus was covered through the Municipal Sustainability Initiative grant. After several months of operation it became obvious to the Committee that the service was not in demand to the level that makes it “reasonable” to operate. The original needs assessment that was conducted showed demand for the service. The consultant’s operating projections showed that if every person in the community rode the bus five times a year, the operating deficit would be approximately \$105,000.00. While it is recognized that no public transit operation ever shows a profit, the Pincher Creek system was far too empty, far too often to make it viable. Under present circumstances, the operating deficit was projected to be approximately \$130,000.00

The Committee recognized early on that it would take time to build ridership. Initially, the service was “free of charge” for a short period of time. When the committee applied a \$3.00 per ride fee, what small ridership there was simply disappeared. Routes and schedules were altered several times in order to try to “fill in the service gaps”. Through April, after trimming down to seven circuits twice a day, consolidating the route and encouraging ridership through a second “no fee” incentive, ridership did increase to 94 for the month. Although that was a significant increase over previous months, the committee made the decision at the May 9th meeting to recommend closure to Council. The Committee regrets any inconvenience this will cause to those who had started to use the system on a regular basis.

The Transportation Committee is presently exploring the options for a Regional Transportation system in partnership with several communities in the SW corner of Alberta. With the demise of Greyhound, intermunicipal transportation has become a problem, especially for area residents needing to get to medical appointments in Lethbridge or Calgary.

The Pincher Creek Handi-Bus Society will continue to offer full, on-call, door-to-door service and will run through the summer months as well. The Handi-Bus Society partnered with the town to purchase new van in 2018. (The Town partnered with the University of Alberta Medically-at-Risk Drivers fund to assist with the purchase of that van). Handi-Bus operations are subsidized through the Joint Council fund.

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