

Report to Membership

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Mission Statement:

Provide community transit services for people with special transportation needs in the Municipal District of Rocky View and surrounding area

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Major Initiatives

Community Transportation Project

Rural handibus transportation is costly. We often travel a long distance to pick up only one or two passengers. Our traditional focus on seniors and people with disabilities may have restricted our ability to transport other community members with special circumstances. For example, we might transport a senior to a stroke recovery program yet deny transportation to a mother and infant travelling to the “new mom” course at the same health facility. When there is no public transportation in a region, our traditional disability mandate may not help the community.

In February 2002, we approached the Calgary Foundation with a concept for a different form of rural special needs transportation. We call it the “Community Transportation Project.”

The project proposes to expand our operation in a specific area, piloting the transition from on-demand handibus into a rural community bus (with a flexible route). We have proposed to link the communities of Crossfield, Beiseker, Irricana and Rocky View with service providers located in Airdrie. We would expand our criteria of who can use the bus to include a broader part of the rural community. We want to start small (and sustainable) with a once or twice-weekly schedule, expanding as demand warrants.

The Calgary Foundation awarded \$10,000 to develop this idea and \$17,500 towards the first year of operation. We have since submitted several proposals to other potential funders. We are discussing the concept with the municipalities, receiving sincere indications they would consider funding a proven community transit system. Several corporations have indicated the desirability of a small commuter shuttle. This aspect of transportation could be possible under the community transportation concept, providing funds to offset more costly operations.

We are cautious incorporating this new operating model. No special needs transit organization in Canada has undertaken such a transition. While there are many profitable transportation opportunities available in the community transit concept, we must ensure that our original core passengers are not left aside in the rush.

From March 2002 to May 2003, we submitted ten applications for \$30,000 funding to carry the project forward. In September 2003, we received \$30,000 from the Alberta Government Community Initiatives Program.

Calgary Urban/Rural Transportation Issues Committee

In February 2003, Access Calgary/ Calgary Transit invited a few rural handibus stakeholders to: "...Discuss transportation issues related to individuals living outside large municipalities."

With over 15 stakeholders (municipalities, service providers, etc) at our early meetings, we have been quite surprised at the number of communities near Calgary experiencing similar transportation issues. Several factors will increase the transportation demand in the region's smaller communities in the next few years:

- Population growth: The Calgary-region has some of the fastest growing communities in Canada. With this growth comes a proportionate increase in the numbers of seniors and persons with disabilities residing in rural communities. As communities grow, other

transit requirements related to socio-economic issues will also emerge to noticeable levels.

- Ageing Population: Alberta's "ageing in place" strategy endeavours develop services to help elderly citizens remain in their own homes. Citizens will be making use of home care services and community-based services. Accessible transportation required to access community-based services is not part of the strategy.
- Health Care Philosophy: Alberta Health's early discharge philosophy lets Albertans get out of the hospital earlier with post-treatment follow-up on an outpatient basis. Conditions precluding the ability to drive increases the transportation required for post-hospital care (therapies, dialysis) etc.
- Regionalization: The re-organization of both the Alberta Health and the Alberta Child/Family service regions will increase availability of Calgary-based programs to rural residents. There will still remain the obstacle of how to access transportation to Calgary or to a program located in a neighbouring community.

The Alberta Government is reviewing funding for accessible transportation in 2004. Money is just one aspect of the development of transportation. Stakeholders also feel that a strategy for sustainable transportation is required.

The Calgary Regional Partnership, an organization of 11 municipalities in the Calgary region has expressed similar concern regarding Rural/ Urban Transportation. Their 2004 business plan has included partial funding for a region-wide needs assessment. Information about the regional partnership can be found on their website www.calgaryregion.ca.

Details of the Rural Urban Transportation Issues (RUTI) group can be found on our website www.rockyviewbus.ca/RUTI.

Alberta Specialized Transportation Study

Utilizing some resources acquired in our 2001 needs assessment study, we developed and circulated a 26-question survey to some 37 special transportation providers across Alberta.

Some of our findings:

- 78% feel their local municipality is supportive of accessible transportation efforts.
- 66% feel they must replace a vehicle in the next 18 months.
- 64% of organizations feel they experience more demand than capacity.
- 65% feel their grant requirements have become more cumbersome and time consuming.
- 57% of organizations want more training for their drivers
- 31% feel the province is supportive of accessible transportation.
- 48% are using a vehicle older than 10 years.
- 28% indicate that their "newest" vehicle is older than 10 years of age.

We have circulated this report to all participating organizations and all Alberta MLA's. We are pleased that several MLA's took the time to express their interest in the results. This report is available on our website www.rockyviewbus.ca.

Strategic Outline

	Status
2003	
• Fund development plan	initiated
• Business plan	initiated
• Upgrade scheduling software	initiated
• New bus and ongoing replacement program plan	initiated
2004	
• Implement new bus replacement program	
• Study demographics and potential need/growth	
• Plan and determine satellite run #1	
• Establish relationship with another municipality	
2005	
• Start satellite run #1	
• Determine future service levels and bus needs	
• Plan and determine satellite run #2	
• Pursue joint ridership with RVSD	
2006	
• Start satellite run #2	
• Secure new facility in response to growth	
• Seek relationship with another municipality	
2007	
• Review	
• Identify new program opportunities	

Municipal Highlights

Airdrie

In March 2002, The City of Airdrie consolidated their public transportation services with Cardinal Coach Lines of Calgary. After the new policies were introduced, a gap existed for special needs children attending development programs in Calgary. Rocky View Regional Handibus stepped in to try to fill this gap despite the lack of support from Airdrie.

Two years later we are still covering Airdrie's youth transportation to Calgary, facilitating access to some of the best special needs programs in Alberta. In September, we had to reduce the number of available seats for Airdrie youth as demand from our supporting municipalities has risen.

In addition to the service gap experience by Airdrie youth, we still receive frequent requests from Airdrie seniors looking for transportation on Monday, Wednesday or Friday -- the days when Airdrie Transit's special needs bus does not travel to Calgary. Almost two years after the policy change, we still receive 3- 5 enquiries each week. We have tried to bring this matter to Council's attention. We still have received no answer from Airdrie Council regarding transportation concerns.

We hope Airdrie will be participating in a regional study by the Calgary Regional Partnership.

MD of Rocky View

The MD of Rocky View instituted a small fund totalling \$30,000 for special transportation throughout the district. We were pleased that Rocky View Council quickly allocated \$10,000 of these funds to our operations. These funds enabled us to extend service to the community of Langdon.

The MD of Rocky View was instrumental in facilitating a donation of \$15,000 from the employees of the Nexen Balzac Complex. Nexen Staff won a company award for their efforts to implement the petrochemical industry's "Responsible Care" safety program in their gas plant. We thank Councillor Lois Habberfield for recommending us to Nexen.

Crossfield

Crossfield continues to appoint a member of Council to sit on our board. Crossfield has also been an active participant in the Rural/ Urban Transportations issues discussions.

Chestermere

We continue to field calls from Chestermere residents and folks considering a move to Chestermere. Despite Chestermere's opinion that they are "too small for a handibus," we continue to try to accommodate Chestermere residents as scheduling permits.

Irricana

Through the Community Transportation Project, we have been able to facilitate transportation for several Irricana Residents approximately 340 trips in 2004.

Beiseker

Beiseker's support to help us develop more transportation in the village has been hampered by our own fumbling with the new "Community Transportation Project. Through 2003, the effort to carry the Community Transportation project into Beiseker has been difficult, especially as resources dwindle for general operations. Now that funding has been confirmed from the Community Improvement Program, we are putting a high priority on Beiseker in 2004.

Cochrane

We've been very pleased to collaborate with the Big Hill Seniors Activity Society in terms of passengers and strategic planning for the region. We occasionally transport someone out to Cochrane when the Cochrane bus is unavailable. Cochrane has been an active participant in the Rural Urban Transportation Issues discussions.

Rocky View School Division #41

We are pleased to have a strong working relationship with the Rocky View School Division Although not a "municipality," the Rocky View School Division remains one of our strongest collaborators in the region. At the start of the 2003 school year we acquired another run in Airdrie, bringing us to five school division runs. We presently run:

- Airdrie to Olds
- Beaupre/Cochrane to Calgary
- Dalemead/Chestermere to Calgary
- And, within Airdrie and surroundings (2 buses)

Fund Development

2003 showed our first efforts to fund-raise for direct operations. Rocky View Regional Handibus has committed to the Ethical Fund-raising Code of the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy and is licenced for Fund-raising by the Alberta Government.

Online Donation

CanadaHelps.org is a national organization facilitating on-line donations. Using donated expertise and financial advice. CanadaHelps is able to offer secure on-line donation capacity to registered charities for just the cost of the credit card transaction fees (less than 2%). A donor can access this service from our website, make a secure credit card transaction and receive a tax receipt (via e-mail) within 15 minutes of making the transaction. Funds are deposited directly to our bank account.

We plan to make more use of this service in the near future. Having the means for online donation is one matter. Marketing online donation in small town areas maybe an entirely different challenge. CanadaHelp.org is approved by the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy's Fund-raising code of ethics. For more information: www.canadaHelps.org

Pre-school/youth

In June 2003, we commenced a 12-month campaign to raise \$20,000 towards operation of our youth/preschool transportation. We are pleased with our first six months of this fund-raising effort. As of Dec 31, 2003, this campaign is has raised about \$13,000.

- Children's Hospital Aid Society \$2,500
- Nexen Balzac Gas Complex \$2,500 *(part of a \$15,000 donation)
- Southern Alberta Action Fund for the Disabled \$1,000
- TD Canada Trust Community Involvement \$2,500
- TransCanada Pipelines \$2,500
- Airdrie Knights of Columbus \$500
- Airdrie Lions Club \$500
- Sears Canada: Young Futures \$1,000

In the first months of 2004, this campaign continued with:

- RBC Foundation \$2,500
- South Rock Employee's Foundation \$1,000

Capital Funding/Vehicle Replacement

Since 2001, our repair and maintenance costs have more than doubled. This is mostly attributable to the age of the buses and the high mileage nature of the transportation we provide. A concise capital funding proposal has been developed and is being circulated with interested parties. Through donations and matching grants from Alberta Government's Community Initiative program, we are aiming to replace two buses in 2004 and two buses in 2005.

The estimated cost of a replacement bus is \$60,000 to \$75,000. Replacing two buses, we estimate that \$15,000 of operation savings will be available in the first year. Another \$10,000 will be saved in the following year.

Fleet Details

Our buses are equipped to Canadian Standards Association (CSA) D409 specifications. Our vehicles are maintained by licensed mechanics and are inspected semi-annually to Alberta Transportation standards.

Van	Year/Model	Fuel	Seating	Comment
1	1996 GMC Rally 350	Gas	W/C: 1/Amb: 7	
2	1994 Dodge Ram 350	Propane	W/C: 2/Amb: 7	Over 450,000 kms
3	1994 Dodge B250	Propane	W/C: 1/Amb: 7	Manual ramp
4	2000 Dodge B350	Propane	W/C: 1/Amb: 10	
5	1994 Dodge Ram 350	Gas	W/C: 2/Amb: 7	formerly Beverly Care Centre
6	1995 Ford 7.3L	Diesel	W/C: 2/Amb: 15	Girardin Body
8	2000 Dodge B350	Propane	W/C: 2/Amb: 7	
12	1998 GMC/Girardin	Gas	W/C: 2/Amb: 7	Donated by R. Howden

Transportation Statistics

Municipality/Group		Calgary Destinations			Airdrie Destinations		
		2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003
School Board	Education	1287	1644	2029	2437	1715	2224
	Total	1287	1644	2029	2437	1715	2224
Airdrie	Education	2175	1949	1461	34	68*	138
	Medical	323	150*	0	626	170*	0
	Personal	223	79*	3	509	120*	0
	Recreation	128	36*	0			
	Respite		8*	0	891	176*	0
	Work/Volunteer	265	127	80	311	116*	0
	Total	3114	2349	1544	2371	650	138
<i>Note: *: tender awarded to Cardinal Coach lines April 1 2002.</i>							
Crossfield	Education			141	36	4	0
	Medical	19	49	64	15	22	24
	Personal	16	18	4	62	80	37
	Respite			0	6	97	58
	Work			10		0	28
	Total	35	67	223	119	203	147
MD of Rocky View	Education	458	804	846			6
	Medical	127	193	258	4	26	25
	Personal	2	4	6		53	140
	Recreation	83	84	69			0
	Respite	11	0	0		64	204
	Work/Volunteer	665	654	801	424	400	522
	Total	1346	1739	1980	428	543	897
Beiseker	Medical					4	0
	Total					4	0
Irricana	Medical		1	0			6
	Respite			0		94	335
	Total		1	0		94	341
Chestermere	Education	420	165	0			
	Respite/personal	17		2			
	Work/Volunteer	122	96	0			
	Total	559	261	2			
<i>Note: Transportation cut June 2002 due to program losses</i>							
Misc	Education			156			0
	Personal	10	19	68	1	30	0
	Respite	9		0	16	10	0
	Work/Volunteer	5	16	99		2	0
	Total	24	35	323	17	12	0
<i>Note: Charters, third party transportation, pro bono transportation</i>							
Regional Sub-Totals		6365	6096	6101	5372	3221	3747
Overall Activity		11737	9320	9848			

Donations and Support

Over the past two years, handibus operations in the North Rocky View region were possible because of these supporters: (*N.B * indicates multi-year assistance*)

Champions **\$15,000-\$34,999**

☞ Calgary Foundation ☞ Community Improvement Program ☞ Nexen Balzac Complex

Benefactors **\$5,000-\$14,999**

☞ Nickle Family Foundation

Underwriters **\$2,500-\$4,999**

☞ Children's Hospital Aid Society ☞ RBC Foundation ☞ ScotiaBank ☞ TD Canada Trust ☞ TransCanada

Associates **\$1,000-\$2,499**

☞ Airdrie Lions Club* ☞ Royal Canadian Legion #288* ☞ Sears Young Futures ☞ Southern AB Action Fund for The Disabled

Sustainers **\$500-\$999**

☞ Airdrie Lioness Club ☞ Airdrie Knights of Columbus* ☞ Anne Story Law Office ☞ ATCO Gas Employee Fund* ☞ Beddington Hall Board* ☞ Encana ☞ Lloyd Ralston Memorial Fund

Contributors **\$10-\$499**

☞ Airdrie Kinsmen Club ☞ Brian Baker ☞ Mr & Mrs Combs ☞ Claire Calder ☞ Living Springs Christian Fellowship ☞ Elaine McCracken

Municipalities

Town of Crossfield*
MD of Rocky View #44*
Village of Beiseker*
Village of Irricana
Town of Chestermere
Town of Cochrane
City of Airdrie
(* Indicates Funding assistance)

Affiliations

Canadian Centre for Philanthropy
Canadian Urban Transit Association
InKind Canada

Collaborating Organizations

(We depend on these organizations for information, advice and cooperation)

Alberta Kidney Foundation
Alberta Transportation
Big Springs Seniors Activity Centre (aka "Cochrane Handibus")
Calgary and Area Child and Family Services
Calgary Children's Village
Calgary Community Network Association
Calgary Foundation
Calgary Handibus Association
Calgary Health Region:
 Community Development
 Southern Alberta Renal Unit
 Volunteer Services (Airdrie)
Calgary Separate School Board
Calgary Transit/Access Calgary
Calgary Vocational Services
Focus IT Solutions
Horizon School (Olds)
Indefinite Arts Society
Municipal District of Rocky View FCSS
North Rocky View Community Resource Centre
Prince of Peace Village
Providence Children's Centre
Quest Children's Society
Renfrew Educational Services
Rocky View Foundation
Rocky View School Division #41
Royal Canadian Legion #288 (Airdrie)
S. E. Rocky View Community Resource Centre
Strathmore Handibus Association

Suppliers

(These folks go above and beyond for us)

Airdrie Automotive
Crossfield Towing
East Lake Automotive
Golden Ou Properties
High Country Auto (Calgary)
Hudson and Company
Kirkman Bus Sales
Moore's Autoglass
OK Tire (Airdrie)
Par Auto Parts
Rich Safety