



REQUEST FOR DIRECTION

Subject: Senior' Bus, Request to Transfer to Municipal Responsibility
Prepared by: Mark Fercho, CAO
Date – Discussion: May 22, 2018 & June 12, 2018

Recommendation:

1. That Council discuss the Jasper Senior Society request to transfer the Senior's bus to a Municipal responsibility and direct Administration accordingly.

Background:

Senior's Society Request to Transfer Senior's Bus

This Senior's Society request to transfer the senior's bus has come before Council three times recently, in November 14, 2017 when their original letter or request to transfer to the municipality was received and discussed, on February 13, 2018, and again for a third time during week at the May 8, 2018 Council meeting.

In the prior Council meetings, Council discussed a review of the senior society request to take over the bus as a stand-alone service, and then again by first understanding the transit needs of the community in its entirety through the Transportation Master Plan (TMP) process (what are all the transit/bus needs and opportunities when considered together where a bus service may become viable; transit from campgrounds to town and also to reduce parking pressure of RV's in town by leaving them in campgrounds, transit from "intercept" parking lots on edge of town into town, partnering with the private sector buses and taxis, etc). The TMP is higher level of a plan to see the overall picture, which would then need a focussed study on transit specifically to determine transit programs possible.

To look at bus cost viability in a business case, the Municipality would also need to include other bussing needs such as Evergreens (Alpine Summit), Wildflowers, GYPSD, COS programs to help with isolation and transporting to events, disabled transportation for non-seniors, bussing to local resorts, regional bussing needs for healthcare, bussing to Hinton, etc. With all of the above information, the intent would be to then consider how this senior's bus service could work within that overall context as part of a transit program.

The Municipality has no internal expertise on transit, any transit program development for Jasper would require outside expertise. A comprehensive review would include ensuring all information is sourced, service delivery models; government vs private, and finally cost/benefit comparisons.

During the Council meeting on May 8, 2018 when the TMP draft progress and direction discussion was taking place, it was evident that the pace of the TMP process was taking longer than desired. A follow up discussion with Council determined that the item would be brought forward ahead of understanding the full transit needs of the community, to consider it in isolation. This report has basic information to begin this discussion.



Below is some information provided for discussion if this bus service is being considered in isolation:

Hinton Freedom Express

The Town of Hinton operates a similar bus service to the Jasper Senior's Society, note the seniors pay \$3 per ride in Hinton.

THE HINTON FREEDOM EXPRESS

- Safe, economical, wheelchair-accessible, door-to-door transportation for seniors, persons with special needs of all ages
- All users must register for service
- Service provided 35 hours per week from Monday through Sunday

<https://www.hinton.ca/280/The-Freedom-Express-Handibus>

Estimates based on a basic Jasper review of the Hinton financials: The Hinton senior bus, after fare revenue of around \$10,000 per year, has a net cost of \$60,000-\$70,000 per year to taxpayers, mainly for wages, this appears to be just for running the service, no expenses are posed for scheduling of bus service. There is also very little bus costs for maintenance and repairs noted. Fuel costs noted are just for special trips as part of expenses to bus. The Town of Hinton also covers an additional \$10,000 fuel costs annually, not shown in bus expenses, also allocation for bus capital, tires, insurance, are not shown on bus expense sheet, etc.

Jasper staff would then estimate the total all included cost for the bus service in Hinton is close to \$100,000.00 annually for all costs included if that very same service was replicated in Jasper with the same system.

Considerations for the Senior Bus Service as a Jasper Municipal Service:

The below points are some items for consideration and estimates only:

The main costs are for bus driver wages, and for the bus itself. Other costs such as insurance, fuel, booking service, tires, replacement bus, etc would need consideration. The level of service would also be a consideration, if this is a municipal service, expectations from the Senior's society are "the same or better", as would be the expectation of taxpayers of any municipal service for reliability.

A bus service for seniors and people with mobility issues is a critical factor for their quality of life in any community. How that service is delivered is the focus of the discussion proposed.



Bus Driver(s)

- Permanent full time driver. Most reliable option, most expensive. Requires a backup. This position could also be an Operator and support the Operations Department in its need for more operator staff when not on active bus duty. \$76,153 annually wages and benefits for this position level.
- Permanent part time driver. Reliable, requires more backup casual drivers and scheduling support by administration staff. Cost depends on hours set.
- Casual drivers. Requires the most ongoing effort to recruit, train and schedule by administration staff, may be most cost effective. Perhaps utilizing other bus drivers in town, however, there may be scheduling conflicts/reliability of service issues when drivers are unavailable. Cost depends on hours set.

The BUS (unit used by Senior's Society)

- Make: Ford
- Model: E450
- Year: 2002
- Odometer: 100,000 km
- Estimate about \$300.00 monthly on scheduled and light maintenance
- Current bus estimated value at about \$7,500.00
- Replacement cost of about \$85,000.00 for a new bus
- Fuel costs at about \$1500.00 per year at current service level, increased use would increase this
- Insurance, tires, parts, etc as older bus needs to be maintained

Other considerations:

- Federal and Provincial grant funding programs for transit/bussing in Alberta seem to target over 10,000 population centers, however, this area could also be explored further for opportunities for support funding
- Administration would need to have resources added or redirected time to take over the scheduling and booking of bus services for driver, also for bus service and passenger needs
- COS will include this Jasper senior's bus consideration in the recently awarded to COS: Alternate Transportation for Seniors Rural Alberta Regional Pilots grant project. This is a very small (\$10k) grant split between Edson, Jasper, Hinton and Yellowhead county (more of a regional bussing context than local), but the access to expertise on bussing will be requested for supporting Jasper's needs in this respect also
- Senior bussing has been discussed at the COS Seniors CAT team meetings, and will be again added to the agenda
- The senior's bus concept will continue to be part of the larger transit study and transportation master plan considerations as we move forward in all our other planning work also



Jasper Senior's Society, Senior's Bus Service Information (The text below provided by the Senior's Society):

Use of Bus

The bus is used regularly on Friday afternoons to take seniors and disabled passengers to and from appointments in Jasper townsite, medical clinic, legal offices, banks, pharmacies, grocery stores, postoffice, hardware store, etc. As required, transportation is provided to the health care centre for out-patient baths, hairdresser, etc. Once monthly, (third Thursday) there is an all-day run to Hinton (8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.) for appointments at hospital, optometrist, denturist and shopping stops. Door-to-door service is provided on all these trips. Drivers assist with bringing shopping bags into residences. Arrangements for pick-up is prearranged via telephone.

As well as Senior Society activities, the activities director at Alpine Summit Seniors lodge arranges bookings for trips in the local area, summer days to Lake Annette, etc. and other local area activities.

Last year's log records are in the hands of the person who does the annual financial review. The months of September and October show 31 and 34 users respectively. We will be able to supply additional user numbers when the review is completed.

Condition of Bus

Jasper Tire & Auto does our regular maintenance, servicing, repairs and licensing inspections. They have been unable to give us life-expectancy estimates. The bus was purchased in 2002 and has 90k+ kilometres on it. I am hand delivering a revenue and expense statement of the Bus Account showing comparative figures for the years ending August 31, 2016 and 2017. The records for the last few years show an annual deficit of between \$11,000. and \$18,000. JSS has covered these losses by community fundraising i.e. "Keep the Bus Rolling" initiative, Community Initiatives Program Grant and cash on hand.

Future Opportunities

The bus is licensed with the province to transport seniors and disabled passengers within the province, but it could be expanded if there was a requirement to go to BC. The bus configuration will carry up to fourteen seated passengers with the possibility of anchoring in up to three passengers in wheelchairs. The bus is the only vehicle in town with a disabled lift, hence we've done a few passenger shuttles in recent years for Rocky Mountaineer Rail Tours between the station and local hotels. We make every effort not to compete with local bus and taxi companies. We can provide a copy of the insurance policy with Carleton Insurance. The coverage was increased several years ago at the request of Rocky Mountaineer.

Funding

The Society has some monies designated for bus replacement. The only ongoing funding has been an annual provincial transportation grant in the amount of \$14,964.00 passed on to us from the Municipality. This was discontinued in 2010.

The bus operation is organized by a bus co-ordinator who is paid \$350.00 monthly. This includes handling bookings, arranging for drivers and maintaining the bus. The drivers are not volunteers and receive an honorarium of \$18.00/hourly. The drivers and co-ordinator receive payment for all of their services.



The riders pay as follows:

- \$7.00 for the weekly Friday local trips;
- \$20.00 for the monthly trips to Hinton.

As we mentioned previously the Seniors bus is available for shuttles of Rocky Mountaineer Rail Tours for disabled passengers. The charge Has been \$100.00 but is now increased to \$150. per trip.

We received Community Initiatives Program grants in 2011 in the amount of \$20,000. as well as the sum of \$17,000. in 2015.

We have funds invested in GIC's. Some of that money has been specifically designated for bus replacement and might be attached to the transfer of the bus but that will have to involve discussion with the membership.

We trust that the bus service for seniors and handicapped persons will be continued to the same or better level of service provided now. Several of our members attended the Transportation Master Plan Open House last fall and shared some ideas and we would welcome the opportunity to have representatives involved in future discussions if that would be helpful.

-End of Senior's Society Provided Text for Report-

Attachments:

- Letter from Jasper Senior's Society to Council requesting Municipal takeover of service
- Jasper Senior's Society Bus revenue and expense information sheet

Jasper Seniors Society

Box 94, Jasper, Alberta T0E 1E0

November 9, 2017

Mayor Richard Ireland and Council
Municipality of Jasper
P O Box 520
Jasper, AB T0E 1E0

Dear Richard:

The purpose of this letter is to inform the Municipality that the Jasper Seniors Society intends to cease operating the Seniors' and Handicapped bus service which it has operated for many years. After careful consideration by the Executive and the Bus Transportation Committee a recommendation to this effect was presented at the Annual General Meeting of the Society on October 16, 2017. A motion followed and was passed unanimously.

The Society has operated the bus for many years. The present bus was purchased in 2002 and will likely have to be replaced in the near future. The Jasper Seniors Society is operated by a volunteer board most of whom are over seventy-five years of age. The Executive feels it is not appropriate for a group of senior volunteers to be operating a transportation service. Personal liability of executive members and safety are major concerns.

The Society receives requests from other groups and organizations to use the bus. Current licensing restricts usage to seniors and disabled passengers. It could be of great benefit to the community if the bus service was not limited to the seniors and disabled. In many Alberta communities transportation needs are provided by the town council resulting in broader utilization.

We hope that Council agrees to accept transfer of the bus from the Society and continue providing this valuable service to the community. Our Executive would like to meet with Council and/or administration representatives to discuss this matter.

Sincerely,



Glenda Cornforth, President

JASPER SENIORS' SOCIETY YEAR END AUGUST 31, 2017

BUS ACCOUNT

	<u>2016/2017</u>	<u>2015/2016</u>
REVENUES:		
Bus Fares	\$ 3,885.00	\$ 4,815.00
Super A Donations	1,247.26	1,125.11
Misc Revenue	<u>870.00</u>	<u>307.00</u>
TOTAL REVENUE:	\$ 6,002.26	\$ 6,247.11
 EXPENSES:		
Bus Co-or/Drivers	\$ 9,912.00	\$ 9,982.40
Insurance	2,248.00	2,088.00
Repairs/Maintenance	3,324.90	1,103.69
Fuel	1,485.41	1,465.53
Telephones	1,029.11	1,038.45
Misc. Expenses	<u>558.43</u>	<u>519.65</u>
TOTAL EXPENSES:	\$18,557.85	\$16,197.72
LOSS	-\$ 12,555.59	- \$ 9,950.61
DONATIONS RECEIVED	\$ 6,403.00	\$ 19,030.00
GRANT RECEIVED	NIL	17,000.00
NET PROFIT/(LOSS)	- (\$ 6,152.59)	+ \$26,079.39

Dear Town Council,

The threat of the fire to the town of Jasper worries me as many other residents. Despite the fact that the evening session coordinated last May 7 was an excellent initiative, the fact remains that because of the limited space and the back noise, many were not able to receive all the information provided during this evening event.

I feel it is necessary to organize another one in a much bigger place, such as the Activity Centre where people would be able to sit and see properly.

I would suggest having a panel of people ready to give information such as:

- Mr Ken Hodges and Mr Emile Begin (the two BC reseachers)
- Mr Greg Van Tigham, our Fire chief
- Mr Alan Fehr and Ms. Tanya Letcher from Parks Canada
- Mr Mark Fercho from the municipality
- A lawyer
- Mr Jim Eglinski, Member of Parliament for Yellowhead
- Insurance Agent (Carlton Insurance Brokers)

As among other things, residents also need to be informed of how the return will coordinated be after a possible fire evacuation. What will be the assistance provided to the residents as for those, for example, whose houses are burned? What is the legal responsibility of Parks Canada for the protection of the Leaseholders?

I would like you to seriously consider this request on your council meeting next Tuesday.

Sincerely,

Marie-France Miron