Attached is the Electoral Area ‘H’ Transit Feasibility Study that, at the request of the Regional District of Nanaimo, was conducted by BC Transit staff, with the assistance of Boulevard Transportation Group.

The EA ‘H’ transit study will be presented to the Regional District of Nanaimo Transit Select Committee for comment and approval and then referred to the Regional District of Nanaimo for final approval.

Please forward any comments on the EA ‘H’ draft transit feasibility to myself by email at dpearce@rdn.bc.ca.

Thank you.
RDN Electoral Area “H”
(Bowser and Area)
Transit Feasibility Study

March 2011

Regional District of Nanaimo
BC Transit
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

BC Transit would like to thank those Regional District of Nanaimo residents, elected officials and staff who participated in this study and provided input. In particular:

- Sally Barton, Bowser Seniors Housing Society
- Elizabeth Hieronymi, Bowser Seniors Housing Society
- Ben Evans, Bowser Legion Hall
- Rick Wickerson, Bowser Legion Hall
- Betsy Poel, Lighthouse Country Business Association (Director)
- Kim Longmuir, Area “H” Recreational Programmer
- Judith Koeleman, Area “H” Recreation Programmer
- Dave Bartram, Area “H” Director
- Lisa Bhopalsingh, Senior Planner
- Daniel Pearce, Manager of Transit and Planning
- Dennis Trudeau, General Manager Transportation Services and Solid Waste

Cover page photo credit to Tom Whitfield.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.0 Introduction
At the request of the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN), this study was conducted by BC Transit staff, with the assistance of Boulevard Transportation Group, to examine the demand for transit service in Electoral Area “H” of the RDN and to create options for the provision of service. The community previously had handyDART service provided one day per week by the Nanaimo Regional Transit System but this was withdrawn several years ago due to lack of use. Area “H” was included in the April 2008 Nanaimo Regional Transit Business Plan study but no options for service were proposed at that time.

This report presents the findings of the study and outlines service options for consideration. The service option proposals are based on background statistics provided by Statistics Canada, Regional District of Nanaimo Transportation Services and Planning staff, a stakeholder workshop held in November 2010, a resident transportation survey, informal discussions with local residents, site visits by BC Transit staff, and comparisons of communities of similar size and density.

2.0 Community Profile
The study area is comprised of the Electoral Area “H” portion of the RDN. Area “H” is located approximately 66 km north of the City of Nanaimo along the Island Highway (Hwy 19).

The permanent population of RDN Electoral Area “H” was 3,474 in 2006.

- **Demographics**: In general, the Area “H”’s population is older than the Regional District as a whole and the B.C. average. Residences in Area “H” are predominantly single family dwellings. Population is concentrated on the northern end of Area “H” in the communities of Bowser, Deep Bay and Qualicum Bay.

- **Land use and form**: Land use planning in Area “H” is under the jurisdiction of the Regional District of Nanaimo. The last Official Community Plan was completed in 2003 and an addendum was completed in 2010 to add the Bowser Village Centre Plan. Roadways are under the jurisdiction of the BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure.

- **Community Amenities and Potential Trip Generators**: Area “H”’s main cluster of services is located along the Old Island Highway in Bowser. This includes shopping, library, post office, museum, dental services, and banking.
  - Area “H” has an elementary school and a shellfish research centre associated with Vancouver Island University. However, most people from Area “H” travel outside Area “H” to access secondary schools, formal post-secondary education, and medical services in Nanaimo or the Comox Valley.
  - The Bowser Village area also serves as the closest source of basic amenities for residents of the Fanny Bay area of the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD Area “A”).
3.0 Existing Transportation Options
Existing transportation options serving Area “H” residents include:

- **Walking and cycling.** While there are some regional trails existing, cyclists and walkers often use rural roads.

- **Nanaimo Regional Transit** does not currently serve Area “H.” However, some residents may access this service from stops in Qualicum Beach or Parksville.

- **Comox Valley Regional Transit** does not service Area “H”, but residents may access this service from Fanny Bay in CVRD Area “A”.

- **School District 69 (Qualicum) School Buses** provide transportation for most students in Area “H” to elementary school in Bowser and middle and secondary schools in Qualicum Beach, outside Area “H”.

- **Taxis** serving Area “H” are based in Qualicum Beach, Parksville and the Comox Valley and operate as a normal taxi service. Other door-to-door services exist on a pre-booked basis for medical appointments and other needs.

- **Other transportation providers and assets,** Via Rail and Greyhound provide scheduled service through Area “H” both north- and southbound. The nearest ferries and airports are outside of Area “H”.

4.0 Assessing Potential Markets for Transit
The study assesses the number of people, general service expectations and ridership potential for each distinct passenger market for transit: people with a disability, seniors, school students / youth, young adults / college students, and adults. Key conclusions are as follows.

- The priority for transit in Area “H” should be connecting to the Nanaimo system and providing door-to-door service. Connections to the Comox system should be a secondary priority.

- Seniors, youth and people with a disability represent the best potential markets for transit in Area “H.” Midday services and later afternoon services should be priorities. The potential market for adults and young adults is low.

- An evening trip would better serve seniors, youth, and some adults. Evening service can be very expensive for relatively few riders. Trips integrating with the Friday night “movie bus” service provided by the Nanaimo system may be a good place to start.

- Overall the potential market for service in Area “H” is low based on potential usage and compared with other Nanaimo Regional Transit System services. However, a basic service is in keeping with the transit system’s objective. Long term market potential for transit may increase as a result of density and land use guidelines in the Area “H” OCP and Bowser Village Centre Plan.

- 69% of area respondents to a residential transportation survey for this study stated they would support some level of taxation increase to implement transit.
5.0 General Service Design Concepts
The study outlines a number of transit service concepts, which represent the “box of tools” that are used when forming the options presented in section 6.0 Service Options. These include:

- **Taxi Supplement**, which uses a private carrier and private vehicles (usually those of a taxi company) to deliver scheduled service on routes or door-to-door services on an as needed basis.

- **Taxi Saver**, which provides people with a disability who are registered with the transit system a 50% subsidy towards the cost of taxi rides.

- **Paratransit**, which uses a transit vehicle or vehicles—normally a smaller minibus in smaller towns or more rural settings--to provide service.
  - Encompassing a range of service types, paratransit services can include everything from door-to-door, demand responsive services for people with disabilities, to buses serving stops on fixed routes and schedules.
  - It may also include many other mixtures and hybrids of these, such as flexible routing (which enables schedule trips to deviate off route to provide door to door service to people with disabilities) or trip windows (which provides blocks of time during which any resident of a specified area may request a door to door transit pick up).

- **Conventional Transit**, which uses standard sized vehicles in more urban settings to serve fixed routes and schedules.

A number of supplementary service concepts are also included as examples of services that could be organized and implemented locally without Regional District of Nanaimo or BC Transit involvement. These supplementary concepts include ride sharing using the Jack Bell Foundation’s free ridematchin service at www.ride-share.com and a volunteer transportation network example from the Mt. Waddington Regional District on northern Vancouver Island.

6.0 Service Options
The study outlines a number of transit service options that address different aspects of the identified potential markets and destinations, special considerations and existing transportation providers. The service description for each option outlines expected ridership, revenue, costs and vehicle requirements. The presented options include:

**Service Option 1: Introductory Midday Paratransit** - This option would implement two midday paratransit trips (one in the late morning and one in the early afternoon) on one day per week between Qualicum Beach and Gainsberg Road in Deep Bay. Service would be scheduled, but would use a minibus that would have time built into the schedule in order to provide door-to-door service for people with disabilities (including seniors with mobility difficulties) registered with handyDART.

Exact routing would need to be confirmed through additional community consultation but it is proposed to include service through Area "H" along the West Island Highway (Hwy 19A), plus specific stops at the Lighthouse Community.
Centre and its adjacent senior’s housing, Magnolia Court and loops in the Jamieson Road and Gainsberg Road areas. This option could be fairly easily implemented on a trial or ongoing basis using an available vehicle and time adjacent to an existing handyDART driver’s shift on Mondays.

**Service Option 2: Weekday Midday Paratransit** - This option is identical to Option 1 but provides two midday trips every weekday. The daily nature of this service would require a vehicle and so it would make sense to implement this option in conjunction with any improvements to transit service within Qualicum Beach. (Augmented Qualicum Beach service will be explored as part of the Nanaimo Regional Transit Future Plan proposed for 2012). Costs shown assume sharing the vehicle lease costs and time required to move the vehicle between Qualicum Beach and the RDN Transit facility near Woodgrove Centre.

**Service Option 3: Weekday Commuter Trips Plus Saturday Service** - This option would build on the schedules and routing of Option 2 to provide an additional two round trips per weekday during the commuter periods (one trip in the early morning and one in the late afternoon). These trips would connect with Nanaimo Regional Transit’s route 90 Intercity Connector, which offers direct service to key destinations in Parksville and Nanaimo. This option would also provide three trips on Saturdays (mid morning, early afternoon and late afternoon). As it would use the same minibus vehicle as Option 2, no additional vehicle is required.

In response to resident requests, a discussion of evening service is provided which describes the kinds of tradeoffs to be considered and possible methods to provide such a service.

**Service Option Summary**
The following table summarizes the estimated impacts for all service options presented above. All figures are annual and are based on estimates that would require review based on actual date of implementation and confirmed service and operational details. Costs are also based on the service being operated under the umbrella of the Nanaimo Regional Custom system; it would not be feasible at this time to operate the service under the Nanaimo Regional Conventional system.
### Service Option Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Option 1: Introductory Midday Paratransit</th>
<th>Option 2: Weekday Midday Paratransit</th>
<th>Option 3: Weekday Commuter Trips Plus Saturday Service</th>
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<tr>
<td>Vehicles Required</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.5*</td>
<td>0**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Hours</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>960</td>
<td>1,130</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ridership</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>3,400</td>
<td>6,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Revenue</td>
<td>$800</td>
<td>$4,700</td>
<td>$9,200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Cost</td>
<td>$11,100</td>
<td>$72,100</td>
<td>$68,100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net Local Share of Costs*</td>
<td>$4,900</td>
<td>$38,700</td>
<td>$25,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Share of Costs</td>
<td>$5,400</td>
<td>$28,700</td>
<td>$33,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rides per Hour</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost per Ride***</td>
<td>$18.50</td>
<td>$21.21</td>
<td>$10.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This option assumes ability to share with Qualicum Beach service the cost to position the vehicle each day and use of asset costs. If not shared, total costs for this option would increase by $21,300 (or an additional local share of $16,800).
** Assumes use of the vehicle provided in Option 2.
*** For comparison, cost per ride on the existing Nanaimo Regional Transit System is $20.69 for handyDART service and $4.15 for conventional service, based on provisional 2011/12 budget.

Cost to extend trips to the Comox Valley Transit System at Fanny Bay—pending confirmed feasibility and agreement with the Comox Valley Regional District—would be approximately $20,200 for Option 2 and $26,100 for Option 3.

### Service Option Conclusions

Based on the findings of this report, Service Option 1 “Introductory Midday Paratransit” is an appropriate starting level. This one day a week service would provide a basic mobility option to those who need it and would also ensure that a sufficient number of riders grouped together on trips to make the service successful. The fact that the service is scheduled and therefore easier to promote and attract riders—and that the population has continued to age—should make this service more effective than the provision of once per week handyDART-only service previously unsuccessfully implemented in the area. Option 2 and 3 could then be considered as ridership and the community developed, particularly in conjunction with any changes to Qualicum Beach service and the implementation of more transit-supportive growth around village centres as envisioned by the Area “H” OCP and Bowser Village Centre Plan.

The three options presented focus on connections south to Qualicum Beach, Parksville and Nanaimo rather than north to Fanny Bay and Comox Valley destinations because there are currently scheduling and service area coverage constraints to the existing Fanny Bay service that make connection unfeasible at this time. Since further long term transit planning work is scheduled to begin in the Nanaimo, Comox Valley and Campbell River regions in late 2011 / early 2012, it is recommended that regional connections form a piece of this work. The Area “H” options may further evolve based on the outcome of those plans.
7.0 Integration Considerations
There are a number of issues related to next steps and implementation that should be highlighted. These have been developed in consultation with RDN staff. The next steps and issues include:

- Confirming the support of the RDN Board and Area “H” residents for the introduction of transit service in Area “H”.
- Confirming budget availability and timing for the RDN and BC Transit (including determining the project’s priority ranking against other regional and provincial expansion requests).
- Conducting further long term regional transit planning and discussion with the Comox Valley Regional District.
- Creating a detailed implementation plan to confirm routes, schedules and marketing strategy.

8.0 Recommendations
If the community wishes to pursue transit service, it is recommended that Service Option 1 “Introductory Midday Paratransit” would be an appropriate starting level. This one day a week service would provide a basic mobility option to those who need it and would also ensure that a sufficient number of riders grouped together on trips to make the service successful.

*It is recommended that the Regional District of Nanaimo receive this report as information and provide comment.*
1.0 INTRODUCTION

At the request of the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN), this study was conducted by BC Transit staff, with the assistance of Boulevard Transportation Group, to examine the demand for transit service in Electoral Area “H” of the RDN and to create options for the provision of service. HandyDART service was previously provided one day per week by the Nanaimo Regional Transit System but this was withdrawn several years ago due to lack of use. Area “H” was included in the April 2008 Nanaimo Regional Transit Business Plan study, but no options for service were proposed at that time.

This report presents the findings of the study and outlines service options for consideration. The service option proposals are based on background statistics provided by Statistics Canada, Regional District of Nanaimo Transportation Services and Planning staff, a stakeholder workshop held in November 2010, a resident transportation survey, informal discussions with local residents, site visits by BC Transit staff, and comparisons of communities of similar size and density.

Study Objectives

Study objectives were developed in consultation with the RDN and include:

- Review existing transportation options within the community;
- Review demographic data to identify potential transit markets within the service area;
- Identify the transportation needs of the community;
- Develop service concepts and their associated costs. Service concepts will be consistent with the area’s population and geographic area, based on experience in similar B.C. communities; and
- Consider all forms of transit including vanpools, taxis, buses, and subsidies for existing transportation networks.

Study Area

The study area includes all of the RDN’s Electoral Area “H”. Area “H” is situated on Vancouver Island midway between the major communities of Nanaimo and Courtenay/Comox. Bowser, Area “H”’s largest community, is located approximately 58 km north of Nanaimo and 40 km south of Courtenay.

Area “H” is approximately 26 km long and 25 km wide. Its most populous areas are concentrated on the east side, adjacent the Georgia Straight. Area “H” includes the communities of Bowser, Deep Bay, Dunsmuir, and Qualicum Bay, all of which are located along the Old Island Highway (Hwy 19a). See Figure 1. The less populated areas of Horne Lake and Spider Lake are included in the residential survey, but are not the primary focus of this study due to their more rural location.

Area “H” is bordered to the north by Area “A” of the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD), to the west by Areas “B” and “F” of the Alberni – Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD), and to the south by the Areas “G” and “F” of the RDN. The nearest adjacent communities to Area “H” are the Town of Qualicum Beach (22 km south of Bowser) and Fanny Bay (14 km north) in the CVRD.
Figure 1: Area "H", Regional District of Nanaimo
2.0 COMMUNITY PROFILE

Community Overview
Area “H”’s permanent population is slightly less than 3,500 and is concentrated on the east side of the Area “H” along the Old Island Highway (Hwy 19a). The area is mainly rural in nature, characterized by rural areas and single-family homes on large lots. Commercial services are offered in Bowser, while the remainder of the area is comprised of outdoor recreation opportunities, vacation accommodations, and a strong aquaculture industry.

Population & Demographics
The following demographic information from the 2006 Canadian Census is of interest:

- RDN Electoral Area “H” has a population of 3,474.
- Area “H”’s population is growing faster than surrounding areas. From 2001 to 2006, population increased by 11.8%, compared to 7.8% for Nanaimo region¹ and 5.3% for the province.
- Area “H”’s population is older than average. In 2006, Area “H”’s median age was 54.3 years, compared to 43.3 for the Nanaimo region and 40.8 for the province. Area “H”’s population distribution consists of approximately 40% fewer young adults (age 15 to 24) and 85% more young seniors (age 55 to 74) than the provincial average.
- Area “H” homes are predominantly single-family dwellings. There are 2,023 dwellings in Area “H”, with almost 90% of these detached homes. 1,573 of those dwellings are occupied full-time and almost 80% are owner occupied. Area “H” has an average of 2.5 residents per home, which is consistent with the provincial average.
- Population density for Electoral Area “H” is 12.5 persons per square kilometer, compared to 72.2/km² for the Nanaimo Region and 881.8/km² for the City of Nanaimo. In general, transit service is more feasible in higher density communities.
- The Qualicum First Nation is also located in Area “H”. The Qualicum First Nation community is located immediately north of Horne Lake Rd on the Old Island Hwy and has a population of 75.

Industries & Employment
- In the 2006 census², 865 Area “H” residents worked in a usual place of work outside the home. Of this group, 17% (150 individuals) work within Area “H”, while 60% (515) work within another Area of the RDN, meaning that they commute to destinations south of Area “H.” A further 21% (185) worked outside of the RDN, suggesting they work to the north or west in the Comox Valley, Campbell River or Port Alberni. A small group (2%) work outside the province. There were 255 individuals that reported to work from home and 330 individuals with no fixed work place. See Table 1.

¹ Based on Nanaimo Census Agglomeration Area.
² Data from 2006 Community Profile (Nanaimo H) from StatsCan
Table 1. Area “H” residents location of employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Outside the Home (fixed workplace)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Within Area “H”</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within RDN &amp; associated municipalities*</td>
<td>515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In another Regional District</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a different province</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work from Home</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Fixed Workplace</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Include Qualicum Beach, Parksville, Nanaimo, and Lantzville.

- According to the 2006 Census, a higher portion of Area “H” residents drive themselves to work and a lower number of residents are passengers as compared to the provincial average.

- Area “H” has higher percentage of individuals employed in accommodation and food services than the province as a whole*. The number of Area “H” individuals working in construction trades is more than double the provincial average and there are more individuals working in the resource sector in Area “H” than the provincial average. In general, workers employed in the service industry and trades are the hardest to attract to commuter transit services due to irregular shift times, changing job locations or the need to carry tools. Area “H” has lower than average representation in industries that tend to make it easier to attract individuals to transit, like health care and social assistance, professional and technical services and education.

Community Land Use & Form

- Land use planning in Area “H” falls under RDN jurisdiction. The last Area “H” Official Community Plan was completed in 2003*, focusing on protecting rural character and identifying three village centers - Bowser, Qualicum Bay and Dunsmuir. Amendments were made in early 2010 to include the Bowser Village Centre Plan.

- The Area “H” OCP outlines provisions to maintain density growth within the boundaries of the village centre development areas to preserve the rural nature of Area “H”. Any future residential and commercial development should occur within these areas.

- In general, increased density in village centres or along designated transit corridors increases the feasibility, efficiency and effectiveness of transit. The current land use pattern favours rural, dispersed residences that make it harder to access daily needs by walking, cycling and transit. The Bowser Village Centre Plan has set density targets which will help guide development towards higher density creating a complete Village Centre which will aid in increasing transit use, walking and cycling. The Village Plan identifies need for a VIA Rail stop in Bowser.

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3 Data from 2006 Community Profile (Nanaimo H) from StatsCan
4 Area “H” OCP RDN Bylaw 1335, 2003
- There are strong preferences both for and against density and mixed land use zoning, which would allow commercial and residential uses to coexist\(^5\).

- There are no major housing developments currently scheduled for completion. However, several smaller senior’s developments are under consideration.

**Community Amenities & Potential Trip Generators**
The following lists Area “H”’s current amenities and services by sector and location.

**Shopping & Service Destinations**
Area “H”’s shopping and services are limited. Many residents indicate that their shopping needs are not met in Area “H” and they instead travel to Qualicum, Parksville, Courtenay, Bowser and Nanaimo (in descending order) to meet their needs\(^6\).

Below are some of the shopping/services available within Area “H”:

- In Bowser, Magnolia Court (6996 Island Highway) is home to most of the shopping related services with a grocery store, coffee shop, other retail shops, and a library. Nearby there is a gas station with a small automotive repair shop, the Legion, and a few other services.

- Dunsmuir offers a small commercial centre with limited shopping services.

- A credit union provides the only banking services in the area.

**Health Care**
Area “H” residents meet the majority of their health care needs in communities outside the Electoral Area. There are a small number of Area “H” resident practitioners offering medical services from their homes, which are located throughout Area “H”. Otherwise, Area “H” residents require access to the following:

- Area “H” residents rely primarily on two hospitals:
  - Nanaimo Regional Hospital (1200 Dufferin Cres) in Nanaimo, approximately 66 km south of Bowser.
  - St. Joseph’s Regional Hospital (2137 Comox Ave) in Comox, approximately 44 km north of Bowser.

- A small portion of Area “H” residents also use the West Coast General Hospital (3949 Port Alberni Hwy) in Port Alberni, 61 km southwest of Bowser.

- Medical clinics are available in Qualicum Beach and the Comox Valley. Public health units, which provide support for individuals and families with services like vaccinations, counselling, care plans, are also located in the Comox Valley and Qualicum Beach.

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\(^5\) Village Planning Project, RDN Area “H” Meeting Notes
\(^6\) Scoping Exercise notes from Jun 2008, RDN Bowser Village Centre Plan Public Consultation
• There is a dental office located in Bowser, but patients seeking more extensive procedures generally travel to Qualicum or the Comox Valley.

• There is no pharmacy within Area “H”, however the Medicine Shop pharmacy in Qualicum Beach delivers prescriptions to the Eye on BC gift shop on Thursdays.

• “Wheels for Wellness” is a transportation service to/from Comox. Additional information on the service is provided in Section 3.

Education
Public education is provided to Area “H” residents through School District 69 (Qualicum). The following schools are offered:

• Elementary School: Bowser Elementary School is located in Bowser and has 137 students in kindergarten to grade 5. School District 69 school bussing is offered to and from the school, with few options for after hours bussing.

• Middle School: Qualicum Beach Middle School is located in Qualicum Beach and offers grades 6 to 8. Bussing is provided for only regular school hours, meaning that students engaging in extra-curricular activities cannot rely on school bussing.

• Secondary School: Kwalikum Secondary School is located in Qualicum Beach and offers grades 9 to 12. As with the middle school, bussing is only provided during regular class times.

• Students attending schools outside SD 69 may travel on public school buses to Qualicum Beach as courtesy riders, after which they must rely on other options. Some elementary-aged children within the area also travel to the privately-operated Beachcombers Community School in Fanny Bay, which provides its own transportation.

Area “H” residents travel outside Area “H” for post-secondary education. The following options are available:

• Vancouver Island University (VIU) is a major university located in Nanaimo (Fifth Street at Wakesiah Avenue, adjacent the Island Highway). VIU offers a full range of post-secondary programs and courses.

• VIU’s Centre for Shellfish Research Marine Field Station is located in Deep Bay (in Area “H”), which is linked to their core facility at the Nanaimo campus. The Shellfish Research centre also includes a culinary school and restaurant.

• North Island College (NIC) has campuses in Courtenay (2300 Ryan Rd) and Port Alberni (3699 Roger St). NIC is a community college offering a range of academic and trades programs.

• Community groups in Qualicum Beach, Parksville and Nanaimo offer personal growth courses on a variety of topics for all ages.
Facilities for Seniors and People with a Disability

- The largest concentrations of seniors services are located in Bowser, where the Legion offers 32 residential units with potential expansion for another 28 units of affordable housing. The Lighthouse Community Centre (240 Lions Way) in Qualicum Bay offers ten seniors housing units; this facility is proposed to double to twenty units in the future.

- Additional seniors housing is offered by the Lions Club in Qualicum Beach and The Gardens in Qualicum Beach (650 Berwick Rd North).

- Community groups, including the Bowser Seniors Housing Society (BSHS), the Lions, and Legion are working to increase seniors and affordable housing supply in Area “H”.

Recreation and Culture

The following are the recreation and cultural opportunities available to Area “H” residents:

- Lighthouse Community Centre (240 Lions Way, Qualicum Bay). The hall holds many local events, classes, and recreational opportunities.

- Qualicum Bay Lions Club (280 Lions Way, Qualicum Bay). Home to the Lions Club and Lioness Club, the facility is used for community events and private rentals.

- Bowser Elementary School is the site of Lighthouse Country Kids Place, offering child care and preschool programming. The school also hosts a number of adult recreation programs after school hours.

- Royal Canadian Legion Br 211 (7035 W Island Hwy, Bowser). Home to an active social group (460 members) with activities, meetings, community events and a Ladies Auxiliary of the Legion. It is estimated that over half of the Legion’s members reside in Fanny Bay and other areas north of RDN Area “H.”

- Ravensong Aquatic Centre is the closest community recreation centre, located in Qualicum Beach. It includes a pool, arena, and other fitness facilities. Mid-day classes are widely attended by Area “H” residents. Recreation centres are also available in Parksville and Courtenay/Comox.

- Other recreational opportunities:
  - Nanaimo Regional Transit operates a Friday night “Movie Bus” from Qualicum Beach to north Nanaimo. Bowser youth currently need to use other transportation to access this bus in Qualicum Beach.
  - Area “H” youth also frequently wish to travel to Parksville and Qualicum Beach to be with their school friends (who all attend high schools in that area) and to access youth-specific activities, such as those held at the Youth Action Market (YAM) in Parksville.
  - Seniors have other recreation activities in Parksville and Qualicum, such as activities through the Parksville Golden Oldies Senior’s Association (PAGOSA).
  - Arrowsmith Golf and Country Club (2250 Fowler Rd)
  - Provincial and regional parks located in Area “H” (see map in Appendix A):
    - Horne Lake Regional Park
    - Horne Lake Caves Provincial Park
- Bowser Ecological Area
- Lighthouse Country Regional Trail
- Big Qualicum River Regional Trail
- Spider Lake Provincial park
- Wildwood Park

Community Events
- Deep Bay Harbour Festival held annually in May celebrating local seafood, art and music.

- Annual Lighthouse Country Fall Fair held in September is a long-standing tradition celebrating farming, arts and crafts.

- Qualicum Bay Veggie, Poultry & Small Animal Swap includes a swap, flea market, master gardener talks, and a pancake breakfast. Held second Sunday each month.

- Qualicum Beach, Parksville, and the Comox Valley offer a variety of markets and special events throughout the year, particularly weekend events in the summer.
3.0 EXISTING TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

The following assesses existing transportation options available within and nearby RDN Electoral Area “H”.

Roadways
- Roadways are under the BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure’s (MoTI) jurisdiction.
- No major roadway changes are planned for the foreseeable future.

Walking and Cycling
- Roads in Area “H” are rural in nature with varying paved shoulder widths for walking or cycling. MoTI design standards traditionally include limited bicycle and pedestrian facilities on roadways.
- There are paved shoulders on both the Inland Highway (Hwy 19) and the Old Island Highway (Hwy 19A) providing some space for cyclists and pedestrians. The Area “H” OCP encourages continued work with the MoTI to further develop these routes.
- There are several regional trails connecting parts of Area “H”:
  - The Lighthouse Country Regional Trail, a recreational loops south of Bowser.
  - The Big Qualicum River Regional Trail, which is west toward Horne Lake.
- In both the Area “H” OCP and the RDN Regional Parks & Trails Plan there are proposals to expand the trail system in Area “H”, including an extension of the Lighthouse continuous trail between Qualicum Beach and Bowser.
- Some residents also use hitchhiking as a means of travel.

Greyhound
- **Based in:** Calgary, AB (Operating out of Nanaimo, BC (1 Terminal Ave North) and Courtenay BC (9-2663 Kilpatrick).
- **Provides:** Daily scheduled bus service between Nanaimo, Courtenay, and Bowser.
  - The trip from Nanaimo to Bowser is approximately one hour and makes multiple stops along in other small communities. Most stops are limited service bus, which do not offer ticketing, facilities or parcel service. See Appendix B for a list of stops.
  - The trip from Courtenay to Bowser is approximately 40 minutes, also with multiple stops along the way.
  - Through Area “H” there are two daily northbound trips (AM and PM) and two daily southbound trips (AM and PM). The combination of these two routes allows people to travel to other communities in the morning and return in the afternoon.
  - The usefulness of Greyhound as a service for errands is limited by the lack of opportunities to integrate with other travel modes at Greyhound stations.

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7 RDN Regional Parks and Trails Plan 2005 - 2015
- **Vehicle Used:** Greyhound runs several models of motor coaches seating an average of 55 passengers.

- **Passenger Cost:** Fares vary, rising slightly on the weekend. The current weekday adult fare from Nanaimo to Bowser is $20, senior fares are $18. Fares from Courtenay to Bowser are adults $16 and seniors $15. All fares are one way and do not include HST. Greyhound offers a variety of other ticket options.

**VIA Rail**
- **Based in:** Montreal, CQ (Operating between Victoria, BC (450 Pandora Ave) and Courtenay, BC (899 Cumberland Rd)).

- **Provides:** Daily rail service from Victoria to Courtenay, with one northbound in the morning and one southbound in the afternoon, with Sunday trips operating two hours later than those the rest of the week. See Appendix C for schedules.
  - Stop-by-request in Dunsmuir, with another in Union Bay (north of Area "H").
  - Most often used as a tourist/sightseeing service.
  - In the Bowser Village Centre Plan, residents have requested a stop in Bowser, identifying the intersection of the Old Island Highway and Coburn Road.

- **Vehicle Used:** RDC cars (Economy Class)

- **Passenger Cost:** Adult fares from Nanaimo or Comox to Dunsmuir (or Union Bay) start at $20, seniors fares for the same trip starts $18, fares are one-way and exclude HST.

**Nanaimo Regional Transit System (Operated by RDN Transportation Services)**
- **Based in:** Nanaimo, BC

- **Provides:** Daily transit service with limited Sunday and holiday service to areas on Vancouver Island stretching from Cedar in the south to Qualicum Beach in the north.
  - Services include conventional transit with scheduled trips, as well as demand-responsive handyDART services for people with a disability.
  - Does not provide service into Area "H", but has two routes which are of interest:
    - Route 90 connects Qualicum Beach / Parksville to Nanaimo seven days a week. Four northbound buses end daily at Ravensong Aquatic Centre (737 Jones St, Qualicum Beach) and three additional buses end at the Wembley Mall (826 Island Hwy 19A, Parksville) Service is reduced on Saturday and further reduced on Sunday. See Appendix D for route details.
    - Route 89 connects Parksville and Qualicum Beach providing service four times daily (no Sunday service) between Wembley Mall and Ravensong Aquatic Centre.
  - The Nanaimo Regional Transit Business Plan (April 2008) includes three goals affecting transit in the areas nearest to Area "H":
    - 90 Intercity Connector - Increase peak period service by one additional AM and PM trip (Proposal S2, pg 34)
- Addition of another bus to increase local service from Parksville to Qualicum Beach (Proposal M3, pg 47)
- 90 Intercity Connector to provide in the long-term 60-minute service between Oceanside and Woodgrove and 30-minute service during peak periods (Proposal S20, pg 42; Proposal M11, pg 52)
  - Due to demand for late evening service, one Friday night bus from north Nanaimo to the Aquatic Centre in Qualicum Beach has been successfully implemented.
  - There has been recent interest expressed by Qualicum Beach decision makers to explore ways to increase transit coverage within Qualicum Beach, particularly to better enable Qualicum Beach seniors and people with a disability to access their town centre via transit. A midday community bus route will be evaluated as part of a 2012 update to the Nanaimo Regional Transit Business Plan.
  - The Ravensong Aquatic Centre is identified as a park and ride. It is also expected that Area “H” residents informally park and ride at other locations.

- **Vehicles Used:** A range of fleet types and sizes. All are accessible to people using wheelchairs or scooters.

- **Passenger Cost:** One way cash fare is $2.25 per trip for adults, $2.00 for students and seniors with a range of ticket and pass options available.

**Comox Valley Transit System (Sponsored by the CVRD, operated by Watson & Ash Transportation Services Ltd.)**

- **Based in:** Comox, BC

- **Provides:** Daily transit service (except statutory holidays) to the Comox Valley and surrounding areas from Fanny Bay (south) to Oyster River (north). The Oyster River terminus provides connections to Campbell River Transit and facilitates travel between Campbell River and Comox Valley destinations.
  - Services include conventional transit that provides scheduled trips, demand-responsive handyDART services for people with a disability, and a Community Bus service for residents in rural areas.
  - The Comox Valley Transit system does not serve Area “H” but provides service to Fanny Bay 14 km north of Bowser via the Royston-Buckley Bay (no. 10) route. The service provides links to buses serving the Comox Valley, including North Island College, recreation facilities, and shopping.
  - Service to Fanny Bay runs five round trips per day; twice in the morning, once in the mid afternoon and twice in the evening, Monday to Friday. Saturday the service is the same without the earliest morning bus. Sunday there is a late morning bus and evening bus. See Appendix E for further details of this service.
  - HandyDART offers demand-responsive service in the Comox Valley for individuals with a disability. HandyDART is available 8am - 4pm Monday to Friday and 10 – 4pm Saturday. No service is available on Sunday or holidays. HandyDART services are supplemented with the Taxi Saver program.
  - There are no formal park and rides in the Comox Valley Transit System, but it is expected that Area “H” residents park and ride informally.
- **Vehicles Used:** A range of fleet types and sizes. All are accessible to people using wheelchairs or scooters.

- **Passenger Cost:** One way cash fare is $1.50 per trip for adults, $1.25 for students and seniors with a range of ticket and pass options also available. HandyDART trips are $1.75 one way and the service offers a variety of trip packages and passes.

**School District 69 (Qualicum) School Bussing**

- **Based in:** Qualicum Beach, BC (Buses stored in Qualicum Beach bus yard).

- **Provides:** School bus service in Area “H” to/from Bowser Elementary, Qualicum Beach Middle School and Kwalikum Secondary School.
  - No additional service is provided to meet extra-curricular activities at any of the schools. Students wishing to stay after school must find their own way home.
  - Students attending private schools have no bus service offered.
  - Students attending the French Programme Cadre are bused directly to Nanaimo with one south and north bound service daily.
  - Students attending French Emersion schools are no longer bused and must find their own way to school or apply as courtesy riders.
  - Bus service in SD 69 is based on collection points where students can gather to create efficient, direct routes to reduce cost and time spent on the bus. These collection points serve as bus stops and may represent a logical starting point for what routing might be considered for scheduled transit service.
  - Appendix F presents eligibility requirements for students taking the bus, the current schedule for bus routes, and maps of walk limits for the schools attended for the majority but students from Area “H”.

- **Vehicle Used:** Standard non-accessible school buses, capacity of 88 or 72 passengers. This is complimented by one handi-bus.

- **Passenger Cost:** All bus users pay fees to ride the bus. Eligible riders pay $40 a year and courtesy riders pay $100 per year.

**Taxi Providers**

No taxi companies operate specifically within RDN Area “H”. Several taxi companies offer service originating in other areas and provide service to Area “H” on request.

- **Alliance Taxi**
  - **Based in:** Qualicum Beach and Parksville
  - **Provides:** As-needed taxi service, cars drive from Qualicum or Parksville for each call. Advance booking is possible
  - **Vehicle Used:** 6 vehicles, variety of models
  - **Passenger Cost:** Qualicum Beach to Dunsmuir is approximately $30.

- **Island Chauffer**
  - **Based in:** Parksville
- **Provides:** Pre-booked door-to-door chauffer service. Provides service to airports, ferries and appointments.
  - **Vehicle Used:** Honda Odyssey vans offering service for one to twelve people in one or two vans as needed.
  - **Passenger Cost:** Rates vary dependant upon distance and passengers.

- **Ambassador Shuttle Service**
  - **Based in:** Comox
  - **Provides:** Pre-booked door-to-door service for trips within in the Comox Valley. Provides service to airports, ferries, appointments. If there is a vehicle free they can provide same day service though pre-booking.
  - **Vehicle Used:** Honda Odyssey vans, one with 6 seats and the second with 7 for a total of 13 people if needed. Can take folding wheelchairs and walkers, but cannot offer roll on service.
  - **Passenger Cost:** Trips from the Comox Valley to Bowser start around $75 with additional costs for additional passengers, there is no additional charge for the drivers coming to Area “H” for pick up.

- **Wheels for Wellness**
  - **Based in:** Comox
  - **Provides:** Pre-booked car service for out of town medical appointments. Has a minimum distance of 75 kilometers with flexibility if other passengers are booked
  - **Vehicle Used:** Minivans are used and offer some options (with advance notice) for walkers, wheel chairs and scooters.
  - **Passenger Cost:** The service relies on funding from the Vancouver Island Health Authority, donations and mileage allowances from clients who are registered with Social Services, and Department of Veterans Affairs.

**Other Transportation**
- **Comox Airport** provides flights to Vancouver, Victoria, Alberta and Mexico.
- **Nanaimo Airport** has daily flights connecting Nanaimo to Vancouver, Abbotsford, Comox and beyond.
- **Nanaimo Harbour** offers flights via seaplane to Vancouver, Richmond and seasonally to Seattle.
- **BC Ferries** provides ferry service to Powell River from Comox and to Vancouver from Departure Bay and Duke Point near Nanaimo.
4.0 ASSESSING POTENTIAL MARKETS FOR TRANSIT

The potential transit market was assessed for RDN Area “H”. The following describes the passenger groups, their general service expectations, and the potential ridership market if service were offered. A resident transportation survey was administered to better understand the travel characteristics and preferences of Area “H” residents.

Resident Transportation Survey
With the assistance of RDN staff and the Area Director, BC Transit created a travel survey to learn more about current resident travel patterns and methods and gauge potential support for transit. The survey and a postage paid business reply envelope were distributed in an envelope by Canada Post to delivery routes covering all Area “H” addresses. As some Canada Post delivery routes also crossed into the Qualicum Beach area, the outer envelope asked residents outside of Area “H” to disregard the survey.

The survey was distributed in late-November with a request to respond by December 7, 2010. There were approximately 1,850 deliveries made and of these, 1,206 deliveries were made on postal routes primarily serving Area “H”. Of these, 329 surveys were returned, approximately 18% of all surveys distributed. Survey responses were entered and tabulated by BC Transit staff, and further analyzed and summarized by Boulevard Transportation Group staff.

It is important to note that while this style of survey provides extremely helpful information to assist with developing transit options, its distribution method means it is not statistically valid. Full survey results are included in Appendix G and further analysis in Appendix H.

Travel Demand Periods
Respondents were asked to indicate the typical time of departure and return for their daily commute. The peak for morning departures begins at 7:30am, reaching its maximum at 8am and remaining high until 9 am. A second peak occurs at 10am, though many indicated their morning departures occur outside the 5am to 10:30am window. In the afternoon, most people reported they return home between 3:30pm and 5:30pm with a significant drop in returns after 6pm. The largest group of respondents reported to return home outside of the window between 3:00pm and 7:30pm.

Current Travel Mode
For individuals who reported attending school full time the most common transportation option is school bus (35%), closely followed by passengers in private vehicles (33%), and then by driving themselves (14%). For respondents who work outside of the home, 77% commute to work as a vehicle driver, with a further 10% commuting regularly as vehicle passengers. Of the individuals who replied to being home during the day 63% drive to their destinations, 20% are passengers and 9% walk. Throughout Area “H,” 61% of households have one car per eligible driver (age 15+), while 27% have less than one vehicle per driver.

Location of Employment
Residents were asked the location of their usual place of work. 54% indicated that they working south of Area “H” in Qualicum Beach, Parksville or Nanaimo, 20% indicated that they work in Area “H”, and 11% indicated that they work in Fanny Bay, Buckley Bay or the Comox Valley. Another 16% work outside any of these areas. These results are relatively consistent with place of work results from the 2006 Census, summarized in Section 2.
General Travel Patterns
Residents were asked where members of their household most commonly did their shopping, recreation, appointments and other errands. Approximately 11% indicated that they most commonly rely on services within Area “H”. Almost two-thirds indicated that they travel south to Qualicum Beach (26%), Parksville (11%), or Nanaimo (25%), and 24% indicated they travel north to Courtenay and Comox.

Persons with Disabilities
10% of respondents indicated that a member of their household has a disability that requires door-to-door transportation service. Of those indicating they have a member of their household with a disability, 29% require no mobility aid, 51% require the assistance of a walker or cane and just 12% need a manual or electric wheelchair or scooter to assist them.

Potential Transit Usage
Residents were asked how often they would use transit if it were offered in Area “H”. Overall 19% of respondents indicated that they would not use transit if it were offered. Of the 81% suggesting they would use transit, 9% indicated they would use it every day, 8% indicated every work day, 38% indicated one to three times per week, and 27% indicated two to three times per month. It should be noted that typically people tend to overestimate their willingness to take transit on surveys such as this. However, the 81% is still on the high side compared with similar surveys undertaken in other communities.

Residents were asked the days of the week they would be most likely to use transit. Responses indicate that demand for transit services is consistent from Monday to Saturday (15 – 18%), with a slight peak on Friday and dip on Monday and Saturday.

Residents were asked how often transit service should run. Responses indicate strong support for service every two hours (38%) and morning/afternoon commute service (35%). 16% of responses show support for on-request service for those who need it, and only 1% support midday service. Responses were also analyzed by neighbourhood. Bowser responses show equal support for morning/afternoon commuter service and two-hour service, Qualicum Bay responses show preference for two-hour service, while Deep Bay responses show considerable support for on-request service.

Willingness to Fund Transit
Residents were also asked the level of property tax increase they would be prepared to support in order to implement transit service. This question usually acts as a more realistic measure of resident willingness to use transit, as it actually suggests a financial commitment is required. In total, 69% of responses indicate support for some level of increase in property taxes to support transit. 41% of responses indicated they are prepared to accept a small increase ($1 – 24) in annual property tax to support transit, 20% indicated they are prepared to accept a moderate increase ($25 - 49), and only 7% indicated they are prepared to accept an increase of $50 or more. 31% of responses indicated no interest in increasing property taxes to fund transit.

Responses were also analyzed by neighbourhood. Bowser and Qualicum Bay residents indicated a greater willingness to increase taxes to support transit, with over 75% indicating support for an increase. Support for tax increases is lower in other areas of Area “H”, with only 53% of responses from Shaw Hill/Baylis and 67% of responses from Deep Bay indicating support.
Other Comments
The survey also provided an opportunity for respondents to provide general feedback. Of the feedback received, some common themes emerged:

- For those who support a tax increase, common comments were either from parents who want to provide their teens with more options for independent travel and recreation, or from seniors who wish to continue living in the area but either do not drive or are cognizant of the fact that they may lose their ability to drive in the future.

- A number of transit supporters said that there was little chance that they would use the service, but want the service for others in their area for reasons of improving social connection or reducing hitchhiking or carbon emissions.

- Of those who said they would not support a tax increase for transit, the most common comments were that people moving into a rural area should not expect “city” services, that the system should be entirely user-pay, or that no one would use it.

- A number of comments were concerned with improving VIA Rail service and/or access.

Potential Market: People with a Disability
Outlook: People with disabilities fit into all passenger categories. They include students who need transportation to school, younger adults and adults who may need transportation to jobs or day program activities, and seniors.

- 10% of transportation survey respondents (32 people) indicated that someone in their household had a disability requiring door to door transportation.

- Of these, 20 respondents (63%) indicated that the person with a disability in their household requires the use of a mobility aid, such as a cane, walker, wheelchair or electric scooter.

General Service Expectations: In transportation terms, people with disabilities can be considered in two general categories:

- Commuters: Mainly student and adult passengers, commuting people with disabilities rely on transit for non-discretionary trips to work, school or adult day care programs on a regular, predictable basis. Commuters have much less flexible schedules and it is therefore harder for door-to-door style accessible service to meet their needs since only a limited number of daily trips can be scheduled in peak commuting times.

- Discretionary Trip Makers: Mainly adults and seniors and the more common type of need in Area “H,” these passengers have schedules that are less regular than commuters. These passengers tend to use transit to go to medical, dental and therapy appointments, perform shopping and personal errands, and attend social and recreational functions. Transportation needs, then, are somewhat more flexible and often vary from day to day and from week to week.
Potential Market for Transit Service: In general, the potential market for people with disabilities for transit service is low (based on population) to medium (based on potential usage).

- Midday medical / dental appointments and shopping trips would be the prime reasons for transportation. While connections both south and north are desirable, there seemed to be a larger preference to travel south.

- Area “H”s population is already older than the regional average; as the population ages, the number of residents with mobility challenges will increase.

Potential Market: Seniors

Outlook: People aged 65 and older make up approximately 26% of Electoral Area “H”s population. This number rises to just under half the population (48%) when the 22% of people who may be early retirees (age 55 to 64) are included. Seniors age 75 or over—who tend to take transit more than their younger counterparts—make up 11% of the area’s total population.

- Seniors tend to use transit to perform shopping and personal errands, go to medical and dental appointments and attend social and recreational functions. Trips, then, are of a discretionary nature and often fluctuate from day to day and week to week.

General Service Expectations: In general, seniors request consistent midday service that adequately serves shopping, social, recreational and medical / dental facilities. Services that offer some personal attention and a chance to socialize as part of the trip tend to be better used.

Potential Market for Transit Service: In general, the potential seniors market for transit service is medium based on a combination of population and potential usage.

- Midday shopping and recreation trips and medical / dental appointments would be the prime reasons for transportation.

- Another reason for travel voiced by many area seniors is to visit spouses and other family members in care in Comox or Nanaimo. While a majority of travel tends to be to southern communities, a number of seniors noted that travel north is important for those with family members in care since St. Joseph’s Regional Hospital in Comox tends to be the preferred location.

- Travel in the early evening is also a potential need due to declining eyesight and reluctance to drive at night for some seniors. However, this need can be harder to serve in a more rural area such as Area “H” since it has a higher transit cost and carries fewer passengers.

- Fanny Bay seniors who travel to shop and socialize in Bowser are another potential market but may be difficult to serve either due to scheduling constraints or lack of service coverage by the existing Comox Valley Transit System route serving the area.
Potential Market: School Students / Youth

Outlook: School-aged youth between the ages of 5 and 19 make up approximately 12% of Electoral Area “H”’s population. Of these, youth in the more independent ages of 15 to 19 make up 5% of the total area population (160 people).

- Youth tend to be a captive transit market with limited transportation alternatives. Cycling and various pedestrian activities (walking, skateboarding, etc.) represent the main means of autonomous transportation.

General Service Expectations:

- In general, the primary reason youth use transit is to commute to/from school. In more rural areas such as Area “H” where the School District provides school transportation, one of the more common transit uses is for travel to and from other activities before or after school, whether formal (school-based extracurricular activities) or informal (hanging out with friends, shopping, etc.)

- When not in school, the youth market group tends to use transit to go to part-time work or volunteer jobs, shopping, and social and recreational activities.

- In general, school students and youth have their needs best met by a transit system which offers direct trips between residential areas and schools, which aligns with school start and end times (in cases where no school bussing is provided), and which offers access to recreation and shopping facilities in the late afternoons and on Saturdays.

Potential Market for Transit Service: In general, the potential youth market for transit service is low (based on population) to medium (based on potential usage).

- The fact that most youth have friends in the Parksville and Qualicum Beach areas and that those communities currently have the most opportunities for recreation and after school jobs indicates a demand for transit.

- A late afternoon commuter trip between Qualicum Beach and Area “H” and some midday Saturday service would be an appropriate level to build independent youth travel.

- Similarly, implementing trips that line up with the Friday night “movie bus” service might be a good starting point for area youth. However, the service model for this needs to be carefully chosen and may be too costly to implement.

Potential Market: Younger Adults / College Students

Outlook: Approximately 3% of Electoral Area “H”’s population (110 people) are adults between the ages of 20 and 24, about half the provincial average. This group of younger adults may be working or looking for work, may have started families, and may be attending a post-secondary or technical institution (“college” should be taken as referring to both). Unlike youth, captive young adult riders have a greater tendency to take midday trips to perform personal errands or shop.
General Service Expectations:
- Service needs for college students are nearly identical to those of school students. Transit schedules need to correspond to the majority of class start and end times and transit must pass close to learning facilities. However, midday service to these facilities is also necessary since not all college students attend school full-time and not all courses have the same class schedules.

- Younger adults have similar needs to commuters in general, but they may also work part-time or in jobs without standard hours or shifts. This lack of regularity makes midday service more important. For reasons of better health and less insurance coverage, this passenger group tends to make fewer medical/dental related trips.

Potential Market for Transit Service: In general, the potential younger adult and youth market for transit service is low (based on population and usage).

- From a financial and time point of view, students who commute daily to/from Vancouver Island University in Nanaimo or North Island College in Courtenay likely either own a vehicle (if living at home in Area “H”) or rent other accommodation closer to school. Varying class schedules and relative infrequency of existing connecting transit services at Qualicum Beach or Fanny Bay make transit travel from Bowser to post-secondary classes challenging.

- There are a small number of students attending studies at VIU’s shellfish research facility but these would likely either use VIU-provided transportation (if living elsewhere in the RDN) or walk or cycle (if living nearby in Area “H”) since it would be harder for transit to closely meet class times as well as the needs of other users.

- Other young adults not going to school may benefit from the same services targeted to meet the needs of seniors, youth and a limited number of commuters.

Potential Market: Adults
Outlook: People ages 25 to 64 make up approximately 55% of Area “H”’s population, similar to the provincial average (56%). When people between the ages of 55 and 64 are removed from this category (since they may be early retirees and are already discussed in the seniors category above), this number drops to 34% or 1,165 people.

In general, members of this group are more likely to be financially stable and most likely to own a private automobile. Transit passengers in this group are normally split into two:

- Captive adult riders are those who do not own or have regular access to a private vehicle, often for economic reasons. These passengers have similar transit needs to working young adults.

- Choice adult riders are those who have access to (or could have access to) a private automobile, but choose to use transit for economic, environmental, social or health reasons. Members of this group are typically regular commuters and expect service that rival the convenience and travel time of an automobile.
General Service Expectations:
- The commuters of this group expect direct service timed to meet key connections and common work start and end times.
- Adults with less rigid schedules require service similar to younger adult riders.

Potential Market for Transit Service: Typically throughout B.C., this population segment is the most likely to own private automobiles and the least likely to use transit. This is even more so in Area “H” given that the majority of people working outside the home are working in employment sectors very hard to serve by transit (see the discussion under “Industries and Employment” in section 2.0 Community Profile). At the same time, implementing transit services that would be frequent and direct enough to attract choice commuters would be prohibitively expensive for the relatively small population of Area “H.” Therefore, the potential adult market for transit service is considered to be low.

Potential Markets: Conclusions
- The primary focus for any Area “H” transit service should be on connections with the Nanaimo Regional Transit System and enabling door-to-door service for those who need it. Connecting with the Comox Valley Transit System should be a secondary priority.

- Seniors, youth and people with a disability represent the best potential markets for transit in Area “H.” Midday service and later afternoon service should be the priorities.

- The potential transit market for adults and young adults is low. One commuter trip in the morning and one in the afternoon would provide a basic level of service for those without other options and would broaden the flexibility of travel for other users. However, these trips should be considered a secondary priority.

- An evening trip would better enable seniors, youth and some adults to better participate in the community and access jobs and recreation. However, evening service can be very expensive for the relatively low number of people carried. Trips integrating with the existing Friday night “movie bus” service already provided by the Nanaimo Regional Transit System would be a good place to start, depending on the service model used.

- Overall the potential market for service within RDN Area “H” is low based on potential usage when compared with other Nanaimo Regional Transit System services. However, providing a basic level of service to the area would be consistent with one of the transit system’s objectives of providing “a basic level of mobility for those who are dependent on transit.”8 Over the long term, market potential for transit can be increased by following the density and land use guidelines outlined in the Area “H” OCP and the Bowser Village Centre Plan.

- 69% of area respondents to a residential transportation survey for this study stated they would support some level of taxation increase to implement transit.

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8 Nanaimo Regional Transit Business Plan (April 2008), Page 2.
5.0 GENERAL SERVICE CONCEPTS

The following outlines general transit service design concepts. These concepts represent the "box of tools" that will be used when forming the options presented in section 6.0 Service Options.

A number of supplementary service concepts are also included. These supplementary concepts provide examples of services that could be organized and implemented locally should the community wish to pursue other forms of transportation without Regional District of Nanaimo or BC Transit involvement.

Transit Service Design Concepts

Taxi Supplement

Taxi Supplement uses a private vehicle owner (normally a taxi operator) to provide transit services. These services may be stand-alone or may augment services provided by other transit vehicles.

In general, Taxi Supplement trips are dispatched to a taxi operator and are operated using the taxi company’s private vehicle(s). Passengers using the service pay a standard transit fare (which covers a portion of costs), with the remaining portion paid by local transit funding partners. The cost of service may either be a metered amount (usually the case where taxi-dispatched trips are used to complement regular transit service as needed) or on a per-trip or per-hour amount (usually the case when scheduled trips are regularly operated by taxi).

Some examples from other locations of existing BC Transit services that are operated through Taxi Supplement include:

- **Nanaimo Regional Transit handyDART Services**, which has the ability to dispatch door-to-door trips for registered people with disabilities to local taxi operators when the regular handyDART vehicles are either over booked or otherwise unavailable. (See: www.transitbc.com/regions/nan/accessible/family_of_services.cfm)

- **Pemberton Paratransit**, where a taxi operator provides seven scheduled round trips per day between Lil’wat First Nation communities and the Village of Pemberton using private vehicles. (See: www.transitbc.com/regions/whi/schedules/schedule.cfm?line=100&)

- **Central Fraser Valley Transit**, where taxis are used to provided shared-ride service within Mission to transport pre-booked passengers to the train station to meet very early West Coast Express trips that occur prior to the start up of regular service on the transit system. (See: www.transitbc.com/regions/cfv/schedules/wce.cfm)

A key benefit of Taxi Supplement service is that funding partners are not directly responsible for funding vehicle leases, insurance, and maintenance. It can also be a more economical way of delivering service since funding partners do not have to pay for driver “down time” between trips.

On the other hand, depending on the operator, Taxi Supplement programs can be harder to monitor and control in terms of customer service and integration within a transit system. The
funding partners may have less control over the physical condition of vehicles used and whether or not they are accessible to people using wheelchairs and scooters. Also, at some point enough trips are carried that it is actually more feasible to pay a driver for a number of hours of work.

The term “Taxi Supplement” is used as a general description. The Taxi Supplement services proposed in the options below may be provided by an existing area taxi operator or may be provided by any other area transportation or taxi company that owns or acquires an accessible vehicle.

**Taxi Saver**

Taxi Saver programs normally complement handyDART services in larger communities. (HandyDART provides door-to-door pre-booked transportation for people with a disability). The Taxi Saver program provides people with a disability who are registered with the transit system a 50% subsidy towards the cost of taxi rides. Registered users would typically use subsidized Taxi Saver coupons to travel by taxi when handyDART cannot accommodate their needs.

In smaller towns and more rural communities, the Taxi Saver program can be implemented to provide for more flexible and spontaneous travel, either in the place of transit services or to complement them. Through the program, eligible individuals can purchase a $60 package of Taxi Saver coupons at a cost of $30. This package can be purchased once every three months. The coupons come in denominations of $1, $2 and $3.

The registered client uses the coupons to pay the dollar meter rate of taxi fare. For example, if a taxi fare is $5.80, the passenger pays $5.00 in coupons and 80 cents in change. (Taxi drivers do not give change on Taxi Saver coupons.) In the Nanaimo Regional Transit System, eligible handyDART clients must obtain a handyPASS from the system which allows them to purchase and use Taxi Saver coupons.

The key benefit to the Taxi Saver Program is that it offers flexibility for passengers to travel when they want and can help support taxi providers in a community, thereby assisting in keeping them viable to provide Taxi Supplement services.

One challenge with the program is that it is harder to monitor usage and that—particularly in smaller communities—it may undermine other transit services since some people will use Taxi Savers exclusively without supporting the shared-ride transit system.9 Also, the Taxi Saver program is typically misunderstood to be a subsidy program for any senior when it is actually only available for people with a disability who are unable to use the regular transit system (many of whom may be seniors) and are registered with the program.

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9 For instance, the Nanaimo Regional Transit System has a policy that in order to be able to purchase taxi saver coupons, customers must ride at least once per month with handyDART to retain their eligibility.
Paratransit
Unlike taxi-provided services, Paratransit uses a standard transit vehicle or vehicles to provide service. It is probably more typical to what people think of as “public transit,” but it has better flexibility to meet the specific needs of smaller towns and more rural settings.

Encompassing a range of service types, paratransit services can include everything from door-to-door, demand responsive services for people with disabilities, to buses serving stops on fixed routes and schedules. It may also include many other mixtures and hybrids of these. In most cases, funding partners would be directly responsible for paratransit vehicle lease, insurance and maintenance costs. Within B.C., paratransit services typically use an accessible transit vehicle provided by BC Transit and are usually operated by contracted private operating companies or local governments contracted to provide that function.

Paratransit service can be divided into two basic types:

- **On-Demand Paratransit** operates only when passengers request service and provides door-to-door service. Dispatchers work to group similar trips together and have a specified number of service hours within each day to allocate trips.

- **Scheduled Paratransit** operates on a fixed schedule on a designated route with trips occurring at a predictable time each day. Trips operate regardless of the number of passengers on them. The service may use bus stops in more populated areas or may use flag stops\(^{10}\) in more rural areas.

Between these two basic types are some hybrid options that are useful to consider for Electoral Area “H”:

- **Flexible Transit or Flex-Routed Transit** creates a hybrid between on-demand paratransit and scheduled paratransit by building extra time into scheduled trips. This extra time enables the bus to go off route to provide door-to-door pick up or drop off for people with disabilities who would not otherwise be able to walk to the route.

  The benefit to this model is that it provides the predictability of scheduled service for the general population while also being able to provide a higher level of access and care to those who need it. A potential challenge is that it needs careful attention to schedule development and dispatching to work best. It is easier to do well on midday trips rather than mixed with peak-period commuter trips. Transit trips serving the rural areas north and south of Powell River show examples of this style of service done well. (See: [http://www.transitbc.com/regions/pow/accessible/family_of_services.cfm#rural](http://www.transitbc.com/regions/pow/accessible/family_of_services.cfm#rural)).

- **On-Demand Service Using Trip Windows** is another hybrid. In this case, trip window times (say 10:00am to 11:00am, 2:00pm to 3:00pm, etc.) are published for transit users rather than a fixed route and schedule. People wanting to use transit—including both people with disabilities and general users—call dispatch and indicate during which trip window they would like to travel. The dispatcher then provides the caller with an estimated pick up and drop off time. The bus provides door-to-door service for all pre-booked passengers during that trip window, shaping its route in the most efficient way.

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\(^{10}\) A “flag stop” is when passengers wait on the bus route at safe pull off locations—such as group mail box areas—and wave at the approaching driver to stop. To get off the bus, passengers request a stop from their driver.
If no one requests service, the trip during that window does not operate and/or the
transit vehicle can be allocated elsewhere.

The key benefit of this style of service is that it is the most efficient way of providing
service to people with a disability and others in a rural setting. It groups similar trips
together and ensures that the bus doesn’t travel further than it needs to. The challenge
is that it can be harder to mix with commuter needs and can provide less predictability
and autonomy for general users. Transit services in two rural electoral areas outside of
Comox use this style of service. (See:

Conventional Transit
Conventional transit operates mainly in urban areas and uses standard sized buses (35 feet
long or more) or high capacity buses in dense urban areas. Trips operate on fixed routes and
follow schedules. The majority of the scheduled portions of the Nanaimo Regional Transit
System and Comox Valley Transit System operate on a conventional transit model.

One aspect of conventional transit services worth noting here is that this type of service
facilitates the timed connections between transit systems, such as that which takes place
between the Comox Valley and Campbell River Transit Systems at Oyster River. In that
example, four trips of the Comox Valley Transit’s route 12 North Valley (operating between
Downtown Courtenay and Oyster River) meet corresponding trips of Campbell River Transit’s
route 6 Oyster River (which routes from there to Downtown Campbell River).

Buses make the connection at a shared stop which enables passengers to transfer from one to
the other. This design enables connection between the two systems.

A timed connection between transit systems or routes could also take place on paratransit
systems. However, a timed connection places constraints on the ability to deviate off-route to
provide door to door service for people with disabilities since a timed connection requires a fixed
schedule that can be reliably adhered to.

Supplementary Service Concepts
In addition to the concepts presented above, the community may wish to consider
supplementary service ideas that could be implemented independently without involvement or
funding through the Regional District of Nanaimo or BC Transit. These could be used as interim
measures until such time as formal transit is implemented or the community may decide that
these are preferable over the longer term.

- **Ridesharing** or carpooling refers to cases where people coordinate trips together using
  a private vehicle owned by one of the participants. Likely a number of informal
  rideshares are already organized by Area “H” residents. The community could increase
the incidence of ridesharing by promoting online tools like the Jack Bell Foundation’s

  Easy to use, this tool helps match potential rideshare travelers based on time and
location while also protecting user privacy. The benefit to this approach is that it is
organized by participants themselves and has no community cost. A drawback is that it
is more useful for regular commuters rather than seniors and youth whose travel may vary each day.

- **A Volunteer Transportation Network** is a transportation concept that has worked quite well in the Mt. Waddington Regional District in the Port Hardy / Port McNeil area (http://www.transitbc.com/regions/mtw/accessible/family_of_services.cfm). Through the Network anyone who is a resident within the Regional District and does not own or have access to transportation (due to a permanent or temporary disability or socio-economic reasons) may register with or be referred to the program. Trips are booked by calling the Mount Waddington Community Services Society who coordinates the service. Volunteer drivers use their own private vehicles to deliver the service. Passengers using the service (or families or referring agencies on their behalf) provide a donation to the Network for each trip.
6.0 SERVICE OPTIONS

The following service options address different aspects of the potential markets listed in section 4.0. They take into account the identified special considerations and existing transportation providers. The service description for each option outlines expected ridership, revenue, costs and vehicle requirements.

Costs provided are estimates based on projected 2011/12 budget information for the applicable conventional and handyDART portions of the Nanaimo Regional Transit System. Actual costs may vary depending on date of implementation and final operational plan. Revenue estimates are based on current Regional District of Nanaimo fares.

Vehicle costs used in the paratransit options reflect the use of a minibus. Minibuses are already in use on the handyDART portion of the Nanaimo Regional Transit system and BC Transit is in the process of evaluating additional smaller accessible vehicles for use in rural communities and small towns. In all cases, minibus vehicles are between 21 and 28 feet long and carry between 10 and 23 seated passengers with room for two to four passengers using wheelchairs and scooters.

Note that all options presented in this section only connect to the Nanaimo Regional Transit System and not the Comox Valley Transit System. This is because there are currently scheduling and service area coverage constraints to the existing Fanny Bay service that make connection to the north unfeasible at this time. Approximate costs to extend north are noted where applicable.

*It should be emphasized that the provision of service options does not guarantee implementation of service. Please also see the following section 7.0 Implementation Considerations for further information.*

Service Option 1: Introductory Midday Paratransit

**Description:** This option would implement two midday paratransit trips on one day per week between Qualicum Beach and Gainsberg Road in Deep Bay. Service would be scheduled, but would use a minibus that would have time built into the schedule in order to provide door-to-door service for people with disabilities (including seniors with mobility difficulties) registered with handyDART.

Exact routing would need to be confirmed through additional community consultation, but it is proposed that it would route from the Civic Centre in Qualicum Beach to West Fern and Memorial (either using existing Nanaimo Transit routing or more direct routing via West Fern). It would then route via Memorial and West Island Highway (Hwy 19A) to Lighthouse Community Centre and its adjacent senior’s housing and then via Hwy 19A to Magnolia Court in Bowser. It would then complete loops in the Jamieson Road and Gainsberg Road areas (at Longview Drive) before returning to Magnolia Court and the reverse route back to Qualicum Beach.

**Serves:** People with a disability, seniors, non-commuting young adults and adults.
Service Notes and Highlights:

- If budget were available, this service could be fairly easily implemented on a trial or ongoing basis by making use of an existing Nanaimo Regional Transit handyDART vehicle and current time available adjacent to a driver shift on Mondays. Costing for this option assumes this case. (Note that while a Monday schedule works well for existing Nanaimo Regional Transit resources, a number of merchants in Qualicum Beach and Parksville offer seniors’ shopping discounts on Tuesdays).

- The routing described above enables Area H residents to access local destinations as well as those in Qualicum Beach. Connections to Nanaimo Regional Transit routes serving Parksville and Nanaimo would be available at the Qualicum Beach Civic Centre. There would also be time for door-to-door drop off within Qualicum Beach or connection to handyDART for people with disabilities.

- One morning round trip and one afternoon round trip are proposed. A morning trip that arrives in Qualicum Beach from Bowser at 10:50am would enable connections to a currently scheduled Nanaimo Regional Transit trip at 11:12am as well as access to 11:00am medical appointments and Ravensong Pool’s physiotherapy schedule. The return trip would leave Qualicum Beach in the early afternoon (in the vicinity of 1:15pm – 1:30pm depending on further community consultation).

- This option ensures basic mobility for seniors and others who do not have access to other transportation or choose not to drive. By operating one day per week on an introductory basis it also better ensures that a sufficient number of riders will group together on the trip to make it worthwhile to operate.

- A connection to Fanny Bay is not included with this option since there is less scheduling flexibility to meet or adjust trips on the Comox Valley route serving that area.

### Summary Information – Estimated Annual Impacts

**Option 1: Introductory Midday Paratransit**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Hours: 170</th>
<th>Passenger Revenue: $800</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual Ridership: 600</td>
<td>Total Cost: $11,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicles Required: 0</td>
<td>Net Local Share of Costs: $4,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provincial Share of Costs: $5,400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Service Option 2: Weekday Midday Paratransit

**Description:** This option is identical to Option 1 but provides service every weekday. The daily nature of this service would require a dedicated vehicle. Optimally, this vehicle could be shared with Qualicum Beach to provide augmented handyDART and midday local service for residents of that area. (Augmented Qualicum Beach service will be explored as part of the update to the Nanaimo Regional Transit Business Plan proposed for 2012). Costing for Option 2 assumes that the vehicle will be shared but the incremental cost if it is not shared is also presented.

**Serves:** People with a disability, seniors, youth (when school is not in session), non-commuting young adults and adults.

**Service Notes and Highlights:**
- While this option would still provide one morning and one afternoon trip like Option 1, it offers slightly more flexibility to adjust the proposed schedule times based on further consultation with area residents.
- Better scheduling flexibility may make it easier to connect to the Comox Valley Transit System at Fanny Bay. An estimated incremental cost for the Fanny Bay connection is outlined in the cost summary below. However it should be understood that such a connection would require discussion and coordination with the Comox Valley Regional District and in the end may not be feasible due to scheduling constraints.

```
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Summary Information – Estimated Annual Impacts</th>
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<td><strong>Option 2: Weekday Midday Paratransit</strong></td>
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<td>Annual Ridership: 3,400</td>
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<td>Net Local Share of Costs: $38,700</td>
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<td>Provincial Share of Costs: $28,700</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
*This option assumes ability to share with Qualicum Beach service the cost to position the vehicle each day and use of asset costs. If not shared, total costs for this option would increase by $21,300 (at an additional local share of $16,800).

Cost to extend the trips in this option to the Comox Valley Transit System at Fanny Bay—pending confirmed feasibility and agreement with the Comox Valley Regional District--would be approximately $20,200.
```
Service Option 3: Weekday Commuter Trips Plus Saturday Service

Description: This option would build on the schedules and routing of Option 2 to provide an additional two round trips per weekday during the commuter periods (one trip in the early morning and one in the late afternoon). It would also provide three trips on Saturdays (mid morning, early afternoon and late afternoon). As it would use the same minibus vehicle as Option 2, no additional vehicle is required.

Serves: All users.

Service Notes and Highlights:
- The two weekday commuter trips would connect to Nanaimo Regional Transit’s route 90 Intercity Connector, which offers direct service to key destinations in Parksville and Nanaimo.
- In addition to providing basic commuting options for those without other transportation options, these trips would offer seniors and people with disabilities more travel choices and would better enable youth to participate in activities before and after school.
- An estimated incremental cost for a connection to the Comox Valley Transit System at Fanny Bay is also outlined in the cost summary below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary Information – Estimated Annual Impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Option 3: Weekday Commuter Trips Plus Saturday Service</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Service Hours: 1,130</td>
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<td>Annual Ridership: 1,130</td>
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<td>Vehicles Required: 0*</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Assumes use of the vehicle added in Option 2.

Cost to extend the trips in this option to the Comox Valley Transit System at Fanny Bay—pending confirmed feasibility and agreement with the Comox Valley Regional District—would be approximately $26,100.
Discussion: Friday Night Connector

A recurring theme heard from Area “H” residents was the desire for transit to enable area youth to independently access recreation and friends in Qualicum Beach and Parksville. As part of the community consultation conducted for this report, there were multiple requests for evening service as well as specific requests to link Area “H” with the Friday night “Movie Bus” trips currently operated by Nanaimo Regional Transit’s route 90 Intercity Connector. These Friday night trips provide service from Qualicum Beach to Parksville and Woodgrove Centre in the early evening (leaving Qualicum Beach at 5:10pm) with a return trip leaving Woodgrove Centre at 9:45pm.

This section provides more information for area decision makers on evening services and the kinds of tradeoffs to be considered. It also describes some possible methods to provide evening service should residents wish to pursue it.

- Evening transit service is usually among the costliest types of transit to provide. It tends to carry fewer passengers and may have a higher operating cost depending on driver shifts and available transit vehicles.

- While evening service can be expensive, where it is well used it delivers significant community benefits, especially for youth and lower income adults. This community benefit may also make it easier to attract third party funding for service from recreation budgets, community associations or service clubs.

- If the community is keen to implement evening service, there are a few different operational models that could be considered. Each of these models assumes the ability to use the weekday afternoon paratransit commuter trip proposed in Option 3. When this trip returned from Bowser to Qualicum Beach on Friday evenings, it could extend to Parksville and Woodgrove Centre, thus providing the early evening trip. The return late evening trip to Area “H” could take a few different forms:

  - **Extend conventional services:** Under this model, the return late evening trip would be provided by extending the last Friday night trip from Qualicum Beach to Area “H”. The trip would only operate if there were passengers on the bus bound for Area “H.”
    - Operationally this is the easiest option but also likely the most expensive. As well, since the vehicle used on the return trip would be a standard transit bus, it may not be able to turn around in the Gainsberg Road area and present other challenges (carrying few people on such a large vehicle, neighbourhood noise, etc.).

  - **Use a Taxi Supplement Model:** This model would use a taxi company vehicle to meet the Nanaimo Regional Transit bus at the Qualicum Beach Civic Centre when it arrived on its last Friday night trip. If there were passengers bound for Area “H”, they would transfer to the taxi vehicle to be dropped off at their door. The trip would be a shared ride service and the transit system would pay the metered rate.

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11 Since the transit vehicle would travel back to the transit garage near Woodgrove Centre anyway, the additional cost to run it in service would be marginal. This trip could also provide additional benefits to other Oceanside residents.
- This option would be the much more cost effective than extending the conventional service and offers the ability to get passengers to their homes late at night without being neighbourhood intrusive. On the other hand, depending on the taxi provider, some parents may be reluctant to have their youth using the service. It also requires the taxi operator to be reliable, maintain good communication and coordination with Nanaimo Regional Transit and have a vehicle with sufficient capacity to meet need.

- **Use a Community Resource**: This model would operate identical to the Taxi Supplement option (and could be managed / funded through the Taxi Supplement model) but would use another community organization and vehicle to deliver service. An example of this is the youth bus previously operated by the Smithers Community Services Association to deliver Friday evening service in that community.
  - This method may be more appealing to some parents than a taxi and may have fewer reliability risks. It may also provide the opportunity to be partially funded through other parties. However, no obvious community organization with a vehicle seems to be available at present and developing this solution would require a local “champion” to do the leg work. Also, since community organizations can change based on funding availability and mandates from their Boards, this option may not be sustainable over the long term.
SERVICE OPTION SUMMARY

The following table summarizes the estimated impacts for all service options presented above. All figures are annual and are based on estimates that would require review based on actual date of implementation and confirmed service and operational details. Costs are also based on the service being operated under the umbrella of the Nanaimo Regional Custom system; it would not be feasible at this time to operate the service under the Nanaimo Regional Conventional system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Option Summary</th>
<th>Option 1: Introductory Midday Paratransit</th>
<th>Option 2: Weekday Midday Paratransit</th>
<th>Option 3: Weekday Commuter Trips Plus Saturday Service</th>
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<td><strong>Vehicles Required</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Ridership</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Total Revenue</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cost per Ride</strong>*</td>
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<td>$21.21</td>
<td>$10.16</td>
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* This option assumes ability to share with Qualicum Beach service the cost to position the vehicle each day and use of asset costs. If not shared, total costs for this option would increase by $21,300 (or an additional local share of $16,800).
** Assumes use of the vehicle provided in Option 2.
*** For comparison, cost per ride on the existing Nanaimo Regional Transit System is $20.69 for handyDART service and $4.15 for conventional service, based on provisional 2011/12 budget.

Cost to extend trips to the Comox Valley Transit System at Fanny Bay—pending confirmed feasibility and agreement with the Comox Valley Regional District—would be approximately $20,200 for Option 2 and $26,100 for Option 3.
SERVICE OPTION CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this report, Service Option 1 “Introductory Midday Paratransit” would be an appropriate starting level for the Area “H” community. This one day a week service would provide a basic mobility option to those who need it and would also ensure that a sufficient number of riders grouped together on trips to make the service successful. The fact that the service is scheduled and therefore easier to promote and attract riders—and that the population has continued to age—should make this service more effective than the provision of once per week handyDART-only service previously unsuccessfully implemented in the area.

Option 2 and 3 could then be considered as ridership and the community developed, particularly in conjunction with any changes to Qualicum Beach service and the implementation of more transit-supportive growth around village centres as envisioned by the Area “H” OCP and Bowser Village Centre Plan.

The three options presented focus on connections south to Qualicum Beach, Parksville and Nanaimo rather than north to Fanny Bay and Comox Valley destinations because there are currently scheduling and service area coverage constraints to the existing Fanny Bay service that make connection unfeasible at this time. Since further long term transit planning work is scheduled to begin in the Nanaimo, Comox Valley and Campbell River regions in late 2011/early 2012, it is recommended that regional connections form a piece of this work. The Area “H” options may further evolve based on the outcome of those plans.
7.0 IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

There are a number of issues related to next steps and implementation that should be highlighted. These have been developed in consultation with RDN staff.

- **RDN support** – As this feasibility study was conducted on behalf of the RDN through that organization’s existing transit partnership with BC Transit, this report must be formally received by the Regional District. The Transit Select Committee is the RDN body that would provide a recommendation to the Regional District Board on next steps. Board approval and direction would be required to move forward on any of the cost-shared proposals.

- **Resident support** – The resident transportation survey conducted for this study generally showed that the people who responded to the survey support the funding of transit through property tax increase. However, if the RDN Board is supportive of the transit options provided in this report and if implementation seems imminent, it would be useful to undertake further public consultation to gather resident feedback on service options, scheduling and routing details and their appetite to enter into the transit funding function.

- **Funding** – Under the BC Transit Act, funding for transit systems must be cost shared between BC Transit and the sponsoring local government at a prescribed rate, with passenger revenues used to offset the local share of costs. This funding arrangement means that both parties must come to the table with funding before service can be implemented. For instance, if a local municipality has funding for new transit services but the corresponding provincial share is not available, then service cannot be implemented.

  BC Transit receives its funding on an annual basis from the provincial government. This annual funding arrangement means that BC Transit cannot confirm a timeframe for service implementations over the long term. Typically BC Transit receives more expansion requests than available expansion funding and as such BC transit cannot accommodate all expansion requests. The current economic picture may also constrain the availability of provincial funding for transit over the next few years.

  Similarly, any new service would also require provision within the RDN’s budgets.

- **Prioritization** – BC Transit uses a number of transit service performance and land use criteria to prioritize available funding for service expansions between transit systems. Therefore, moving ahead on any of the Area “H” transit services represented would require both available provincial funding and sufficient ranking against other community requests for services. Also, implementation of Area “H” transit service depends on how they are prioritized within the RDN and how it wishes to grow ridership on the Nanaimo Regional Transit System.

- **Coordination with Other Regions** – As discussed in Section 6.2 - Service Option Conclusions, further discussion and coordination is needed before a link could be created between the Nanaimo Regional and Comox Valley transit systems. Upcoming long term planning work to begin over the next year in these regions presents an excellent forum for that to begin.
- **Detailed Implementation Plan** – Once funding was confirmed, BC Transit would work with the RDN to create a detailed implementation plan. This plan would finalize routes, schedules, stop locations and processes and would outline a strategy to market the new service. Public education on the BC Bus Pass program—an annual transit pass program for lower income seniors and people with a disability—should be included as part of any marketing strategy.
8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS
If the community wishes to pursue transit service, it is recommended that Service Option 1 "Introductory Midday Paratransit" is an appropriate starting level. This one day a week service would provide a basic mobility option to those who need it and would also ensure that a sufficient number of riders are grouped together on trips to make the service successful.

It is recommended that the Regional District of Nanaimo:

- Receive this report as information and provide comment.

BC Transit
March 2011
APPENDIX A: PARKS AND TRAILS MAP
### APPENDIX B: GREYHOUND SCHEDULES, STOPS AND DEFINITIONS

#### Greyhound Schedule, Courtenay - Nanaimo

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Arrive</th>
<th>Depart</th>
<th>Board</th>
<th>Return</th>
<th>Amenities</th>
<th>Meals Available</th>
<th>Schedule</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>*Start*</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>9:00</td>
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#### Greyhound Schedule, Nanaimo - Courtenay

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<th>Return</th>
<th>Amenities</th>
<th>Meals Available</th>
<th>Schedule</th>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>9:00</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Start*</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>9:00</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9:00</td>
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</table>
Greyhound Stop Locations

A limited service bus stop is defined by Greyhound as:

*Bus stops provide limited schedule service for a large number of locations, which do not support a full-service terminal or agency. As a general rule, no ticketing, baggage, or package express service is offered at these locations. Some of these locations may be at a local airport or transit center, while others may simply be a stop along a highway route, without an enclosed waiting area. Passengers should be aware that no Greyhound ticketing facilities are available at bus stop locations.*
## APPENDIX C: VIA RAIL SCHEDULE

### Victoria - Courtenay

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<tr>
<td>Esquimalt</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Langford</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malahat</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>08:45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cliffeide</td>
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<tr>
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### Courtenay - Victoria

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<td>Palmer</td>
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<td><strong>Victoria, BC (PT)</strong></td>
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**Notes:**

- Customers may purchase snacks during the stop at Nanaimo station.
- Stops on request.
APPENDIX D: NANAIMO REGIONAL TRANSIT SCHEDULES / MAPS
APPENDIX E: COMOX VALLEY TRANSIT SYSTEM SCHEDULES / MAPS
APPENDIX F: SCHOOL DISTRICT 69 BUS RIDER INFORMATION

SD 69 School Bus Eligibility

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Elementary (K - 5)</th>
<th>Middle (6 - 8)</th>
<th>Senior (9 -12)</th>
<th>Fee</th>
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<td>Eligible</td>
<td>Beyond 3.2km</td>
<td>Beyond 4.0 km</td>
<td>Beyond 4.8 km</td>
<td>$40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Courtesy*</td>
<td>Within 3.2km*</td>
<td>Within 4.0 km*</td>
<td>Within 4.8 km*</td>
<td>$100</td>
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* Courtesy riders are riders who live within their walk limits or are cross-boundary. Cross-boundary students are students attending a school other than their neighbourhood school.

*all courtesy rides are based on seat availability

Walk Limit to Bowser Elementary

Exceptions to walk limits:
Bowser Elementary and living at the following locations on the inland side of the Island Highway: Anderson, Callow, Cowland, Crossley, Gainsberg. Students living in this area are within the walk limits but are eligible for bus service.
### School Bus Schedules

Bus schedules for Bowser Elementary School, Qualicum Beach Middle School, and Kwalikum Secondary School are included. For bus schedule information for other School District 69 schools, visit: www.sd69.bc.ca/DistrictDepartments/Transportation

#### Kwalikum Secondary School (KSS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Bus # PM</th>
<th>Collection Point</th>
<th>Bus # PM</th>
<th>Drop Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R-5</td>
<td>7:45 AM</td>
<td>Boyle &amp; Hay</td>
<td>R-8</td>
<td>7:30 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-9</td>
<td>7:15 AM</td>
<td>Center &amp; Texada</td>
<td>R-16</td>
<td>7:25 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-2</td>
<td>7:51 AM</td>
<td>Photondale</td>
<td>R-14</td>
<td>7:40 AM</td>
</tr>
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<td>Qualicum Beach</td>
<td>R-12</td>
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<td>Qualicum Beach</td>
<td>R-15</td>
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<td>7:25 AM</td>
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<td>Qualicum Beach</td>
<td>R-12</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-7</td>
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<td>Qualicum Beach</td>
<td>R-13</td>
<td>7:45 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-8</td>
<td>8:00 AM</td>
<td>Qualicum Beach</td>
<td>R-16</td>
<td>7:50 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Qualicum Beach</td>
<td>R-12</td>
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<tr>
<td>R-5</td>
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<td>Countess Roda</td>
<td>R-15</td>
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<tr>
<td>R-8</td>
<td>8:00 AM</td>
<td>Countess Roda</td>
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#### Qualicum Beach Middle School (QBMS)

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-11</td>
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<td>Boyle &amp; Hay</td>
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<td>R-12</td>
<td>8:35 AM</td>
<td>Boyle &amp; Hay</td>
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<td>R-16</td>
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<td>Boyle &amp; Hay</td>
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RDN Electoral Area “H” (Bowser and Area) Transit Feasibility Study – March 2011

53
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APPENDIX G: TRANSPORTATION SURVEY RESULTS
APPENDIX H: SURVEY ANALYSIS BASED ON LOCATION