



# Tofino – Ucluelet Feasibility Study

Public Engagement Report

*June 2019*



**Alberni-Clayoquot**  
Regional District



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## 1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this public engagement report is to summarize the feedback collected through the consultation process for public transit service between the Districts of Tofino and Ucluelet.

## 2.1 Background

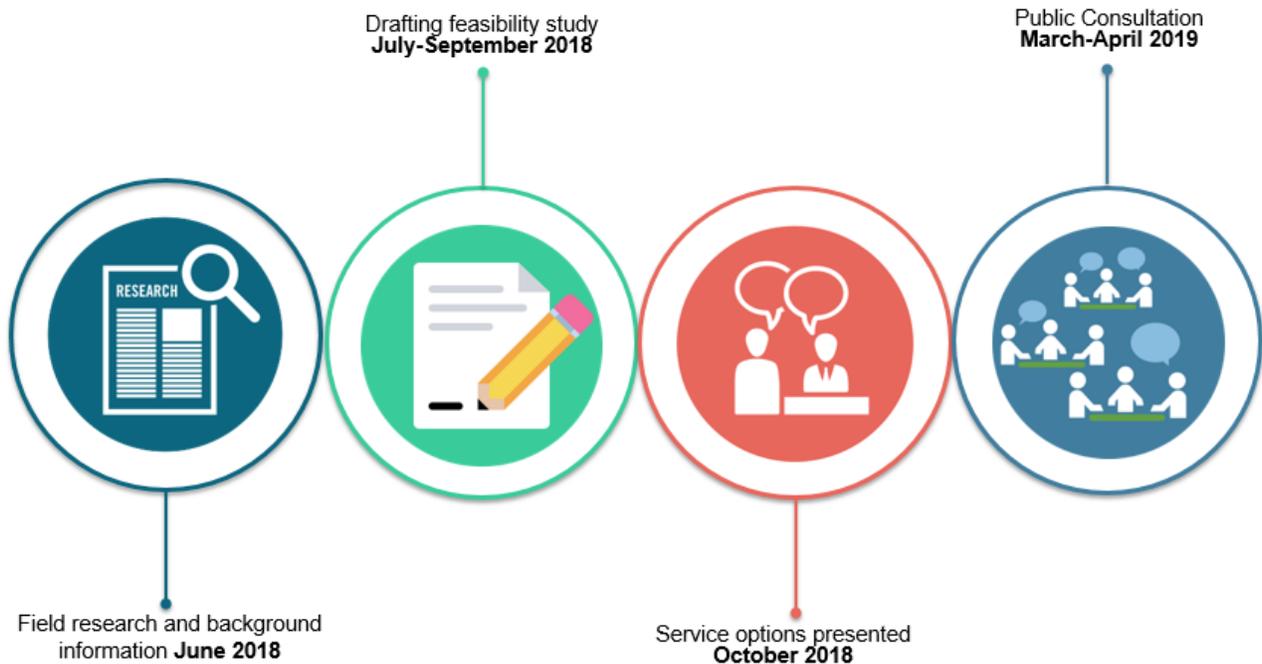
Public transit service has been identified as a priority for the West Coast communities for a number of years. In 2018, BC Transit in partnership with the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District, conducted a feasibility study to examine routing options, service levels, vehicle types, and provide high level cost estimates.

Three service options were developed for consideration:

1. Conventional fixed route service that would travel along the West Coast corridor between the communities Tofino and Ucluelet.
2. Flex-route transit service that would allow for a conventional service to deviate from the fixed-route to accommodate transit users with mobility challenges who live further away from the highway.
3. Paratransit service that would dedicate one transit vehicle to a by-request model and not fixed to a specific route. 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. To schedule a pick-up, customers call the operator the day prior to their trip to request a pick up. The operator creates a schedule based on the requests received that day and notifies the riders of the schedule for the next day.

In October 2018, the West Coast Committee gave direction to staff to proceed with public consultation on the conventional fixed-route service option and to solicit feedback on a possible limited service extension to the Hitacu First Nations community on off-peak hours. This report summarizes the engagement methods used and feedback received through the public consultation process.

## Process



### 3.1 Engagement Methods

Engagement is critical in providing staff with insights into community priorities and needs to enable the further shaping of transit service. A number of engagement methods were used to solicit feedback from different audiences to ensure that engagement was representative of the population and not just residents who self select to participate in engagement activities.

The following describes each of the elements of the engagement strategy.

#### Open Houses

In April of 2019, BC Transit, in collaboration with ACRD, District of Tofino and District of Ucluelet, held public open houses to solicit feedback on the proposed transit service.

The open houses took place at the following locations:

- Wed, April 3, 10:00 – 11:00 am Family Resource Coalition
- Wed, April 3, 4:00 – 7:00 pm Tofino Community Hall
- Thurs, April 4, 1:00 – 3:00 pm Ucluelet First Nation Cixwatin Centre
- Thurs, April 4, 4:00 – 7:00 pm District of Ucluelet Community Centre

The open house boards provided attendees the opportunity to review the proposed routing and Hitacu extension, service levels and schedules, as well as the opportunity to ask staff questions about the proposed service. Attendees were asked to identify key destinations they travel to/from, along with the times they are travelling to those destinations. At the Tofino and Ucluelet events, residents were provided with a range of potential property tax increases and asked to vote on whether they were willing to pay those costs to fund a transit service.

Open house boards are detailed in Appendix A.



## Telephone and Online Survey

NRG Research group was hired to conduct a study with residents of the West Coast communities using two methods.

- Telephone interviews using random digit dialing (RDD); and,
- An online questionnaire as an open link posted on websites ([www.bctransit.nrgsurveys.ca](http://www.bctransit.nrgsurveys.ca))

The specific objectives of this survey were to:

- Determine current travel patterns (e.g. how they usually travel within and outside their community);
- Collect information on current trips between these communities, including main purpose of trips, time of departure, and time of return;
- Understand whether they hitchhike or pick up hitchhikers;
- Assess residents' interest in and potential use of a regular public transit service;

- Determine whether they would be willing to fund such a service with their tax dollars; and,
- Obtain a demographic profile of residents, including age, gender, and community live in.

The survey was conducted between March 25 and April 7, 2019

## Targeted Engagement

Targeted engagement was held with a number of community groups to ensure that the engagement was inclusive of residents who may not attend an open house event, but could benefit from a public transit service.

Youth sessions were conducted with the following groups:

- Ucluelet Secondary School Social Studies Class
- Alternative Studies Class
- Tofino Youth Night
- Ucluelet Youth Night

Seniors sessions were conducted at the following locations:

- Forest Glen Centre
- Tofino Seniors Social Fridays

## 4.1 Findings

### Open House Summary

Over 75 residents attended the Open Houses to give feedback on transit service in general, as well as proposed routing, service levels, and cost estimates. In addition, large sticky notes were displayed and staff captured any additional '*questions, concerns, thoughts and suggestions*' that were posed during the sessions. The results are detailed below.

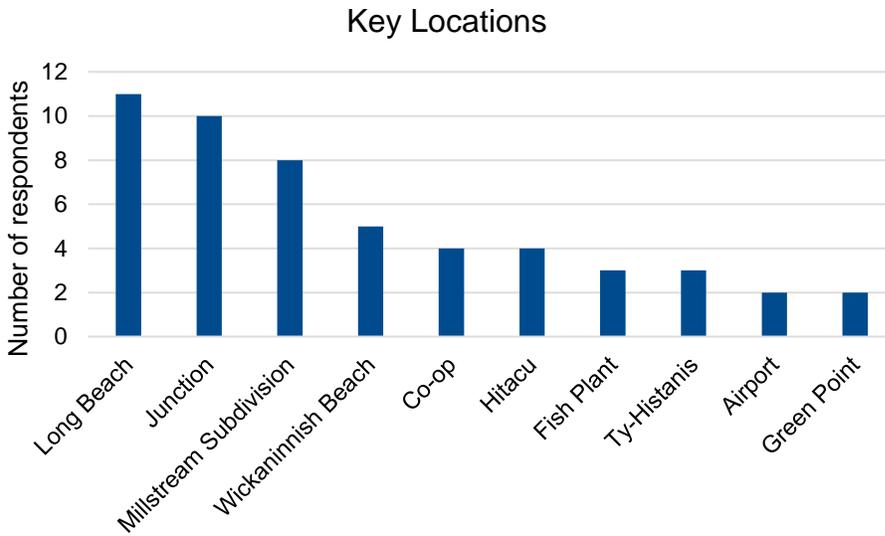
### Key Locations and Travel Times

Open house attendees were asked to identify destinations that they travel to and the arrival/departure times.

- The proposed winter schedule stated the first trip would be from Tofino to Ucluelet. Open house attendees identified that most workers commute from Ucluelet to Tofino and that the first trip should be from Ucluelet to Tofino
- Respondents indicated that they would like to travel to and from recreational locations (Long Beach, Wickanninish Beach) during the mid-day, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

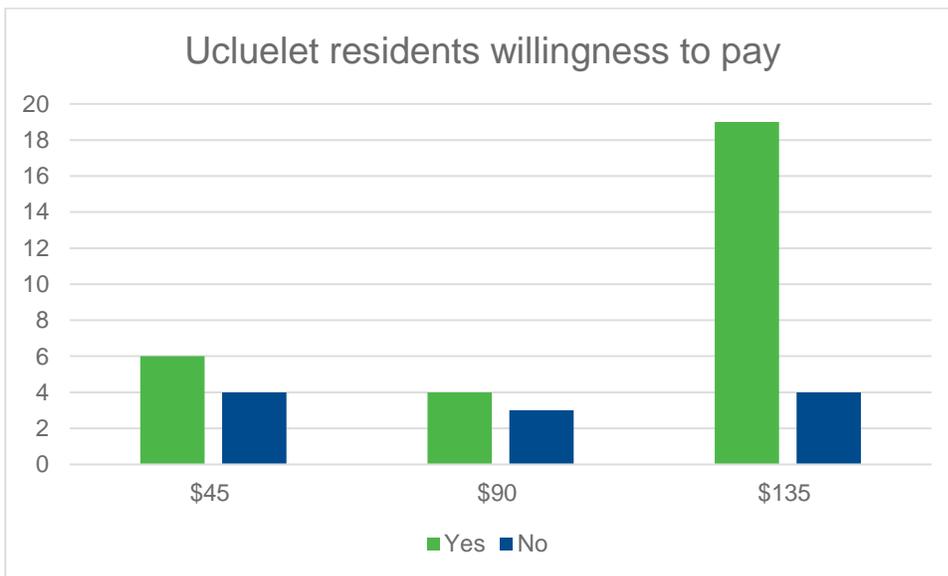
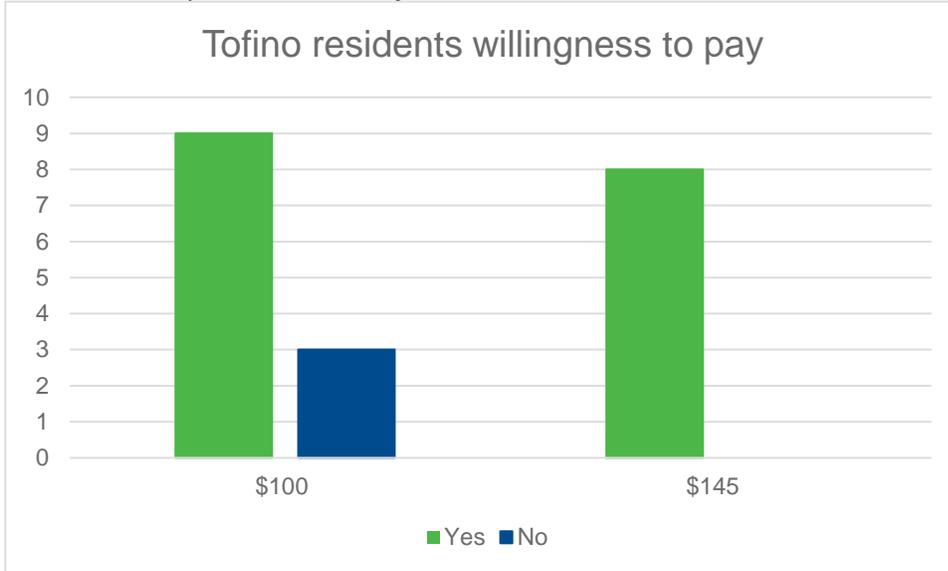
- Respondents also indicated they would like consideration to be given to resort workers with earlier start and end times, as well as consideration for restaurant workers who work past 9 p.m.
- Some respondents at the Hitacu First Nations open house indicated the mid-day trip times would not work
- Many attendees identified the need for bus stops in Ty-his-tanis and Esoswista

The graph below identifies key locations identified by respondents.



## Funding Transit

One of the consultation boards asked attendees how much they are willing to pay to fund transit service. This question was only asked at the District of Tofino and District of Ucluelet open houses.



## Themes

Below are some key themes that were captured through discussions and the 'Questions? Concerns? Thoughts? Suggestions?' sticky notes. A full list of feedback from this activity is attached as Appendix C.

## Routing

- Some respondents expressed concerns of how long it would take to route to Hitacu
- Respondents raised concerns of routing along Neil Street, as the street is residential and narrow

## Fares

- Respondents indicated that they would like to have the option of tickets and monthly passes
- Respondents suggested that a specific pass for tourists, such a 3-day pass could be beneficial

## Vehicle Technology

- Respondents indicated they would like to have surf racks and bicycle racks available on buses

## Online and Telephone Survey

A total of 128 telephone interviews and 212 online surveys were completed. Responses from the telephone and online methodologies were combined to more effectively represent the overall populations of the target communities.

## Key Findings

- Almost three-quarters (72%) of area residents are interested in using a potential new bus service that serves Tofino, Ucluelet and the areas in-between, of which almost six in ten (58%) are “very interested.” Only 16% are not interested in this potential new service (rate it 1 or 2 on a 5pt scale), of which 11% are “not at all interested.”
  - Younger residents are far more interested in using this potential new bus service than older residents (87% of 18-34 year olds rate it 4 or 5 on the 5 point scale compared to only 56% of those aged 55+).
  - When asked if others in their household would be interested in using this potential new bus service overall interest was marginally higher.
- If this bus service came every hour, seven in ten (69%) say it would increase their interest in using this potential service. However, just over one-quarter (27%) say this frequency of service would not make a difference in their level of interest.
- Three-quarters (76%) of area respondents feel there are communities between Tofino and Ucluelet where it is especially important for transit to serve. Among these respondents, the most important communities to serve are Electoral Area C – Long Beach (74% mentioning), followed by Tla-o-qui-aht (53%) and Hitacu (51%).
- Three-quarters of Tofino area residents (77%) are willing to pay a portion of their annual taxes to assist with a bus service serving Tofino, Ucluelet and the areas in-between. Almost half (45%) say they are willing to pay \$190 annually in taxes to assist with this bus service, five percent are willing to pay \$145/year and another 17% are willing to pay \$100/year.

- Over four-in-five Ucluelet area residents (85%) are willing to help fund a bus service serving Tofino, Ucluelet and the areas in-between. Just over half (52%) would be willing to pay \$135 per year in taxes to assist with this bus service while another 15% percent are willing to pay \$90/year and 16% are willing to pay \$45/year in taxes.

A full summary of the feedback received through NRG is attached as Appendix B.

## Targeted Engagement

A total of four youth and two senior engagement sessions were held to ensure a representative segment of the population had the opportunity to contribute feedback on the proposed transit service.

Feedback received in the youth sessions focused on route, schedule, usage, affordability as well as general comments. Many students expressed that they would use public transit for recreation purposes and after school activities. There was also high interest in having a student pass or free transit for students.

Seniors had considerably less feedback to provide, many expressed support for the project for youth and unemployed individuals with some comments around desired routes and stops.

Specific comments are attached as Appendix D.

## 5.1 Next Steps

The results for the engagement process have been tabulated and analyzed to support the completed Tofino – Ucluelet Feasibility Study. The next step in the process is to bring this information to the West Coast Committee and Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District Board to determine if these communities will enter into the transit funding function and pursue implementation.