Travel Drumheller
Transit Feasibility Study

Final Report

June 2026

This project is funded in part by the Government of Canada (Rural Transit Solutions Fund)

Appendices

Executive Summary

WSP, on behalf of Travel Drumheller, has completed a Transit Feasibility Study, to provide the community helpful information to consider a municipally supported public transit service. Transportation plays an important role in supporting community wellbeing, access to employment and services and local economic activity. In Drumheller, limited transportation options have been identified as a barrier to mobility for residents and visitors, including access to tourism destinations that are a key part of the local economy.

The Transit Feasibility Study is informed by an analysis of community demographics, land use patterns, existing travel behaviour and comparable peer communities, as well as input gathered through public and stakeholder engagement. The intent of the Study is to provide clear, evidence-based guidance for future transit decisions for the Municipality.

Community Context

Drumheller's community is geographically dispersed, with residential areas, employment, services, and visitor destinations distributed across the community. As a result, most daily trips are currently made by private vehicle. Residents without access to a car, including some seniors, youth, low-income households and people with disabilities, can face challenges reaching healthcare, shopping, employment and recreation. Alternative travel options are limited and there is a gap in mobility for some members of the community.

Public Input Highlights

Community engagement indicates interest in public transit in Drumheller, with nearly half of respondents indicating that they would use a transit service regularly if it were available. Respondents identified a strong desire for transit connections between key communities and access to everyday destinations such as grocery stores, recreational facilities and medical and healthcare facilities. While preferences for hours of operation varied, weekday morning and afternoon peak received the strongest support. Reliability, community connectivity and coverage were seen as the most important factors in terms of transit servicing among respondents.

Transit Vision for the Community

Public transit in Drumheller will support local mobility by providing feasible, affordable and community supported service that connects residents and visitors to jobs, services amenities and key tourism destinations.

Transit will be designed to:

- **Support local mobility** by enabling convenient travel within Drumheller by connecting residents and visitors to key destinations such as employment areas, services, amenities and major tourism attractions.
- **Provide equitable access** offering a transit option to people of different ages and abilities.

- **Be affordable and feasible** by balancing service coverage and quality with financial sustainability, providing an affordable system that is manageable in the long term.
- **Adapt to seasonal demand** by acknowledging Drumheller's tourism economy and seasonal travel needs and by allowing services to be adjusted in response to variations in population, employment and visitor activity.
- **Be simple and reliable** by delivering a service that is easy to understand, and dependable, supporting confidence in transit use for both residents and visitors.

Options Evaluated

Five public transportation models were developed and assessed through a Multiple Account Evaluation which analysed criteria including coverage, reliability, flexibility, scalability and cost. The options are outlined in

Table ES- 1.The Multiple Account Evaluation performed is shown in **Table ES- 2.**

Recommended Option

Following evaluation of service alternatives and consideration of public engagement feedback, **a modified version of Option 3, consisting of fixed-route service in central Drumheller with seasonal intercommunity service** is recommended for implementation. This solution was selected as it balances coverage, reliability, and cost while supporting both local travel and seasonal tourism demand. While stakeholder input indicated some preference for on-demand service, the evaluation identified fixed-route service as more reliable, scalable, and cost-effective for meeting broader community needs.

Under this option, transit would operate through two core fixed routes (Route 1 and Route 2) within central Drumheller and a third seasonal intercommunity route (Route 3) during the peak summer months. The core routes would provide consistent, all-day service within the primary service area, improving access to key destinations and overall service reliability. All routes would meet at the Badlands Community Facility, which is assumed to serve as the central transit hub. This location was selected due to its central position, proximity to key community destinations, access to multi-use pathways, and availability of passenger amenities such as washrooms.

The seasonal intercommunity route (Route 3) would operate in July and August only connecting communities (eg Rosedale, East Coulee, Nacmine) and tourism destinations (eg. Hoodoos and Atlas Coal Mine) to central Drumheller. The route supports seasonal employment and tourism related travel.

The recommended approach is based on a fixed route transit model, which provides clear and predictable service, is operationally less complex than on-demand options, and offers flexibility to scale routes and service levels over time in a response to ridership and funding. A map outlining the routes that will be operated through Option 3 is shown in **Figure ES- 1**.

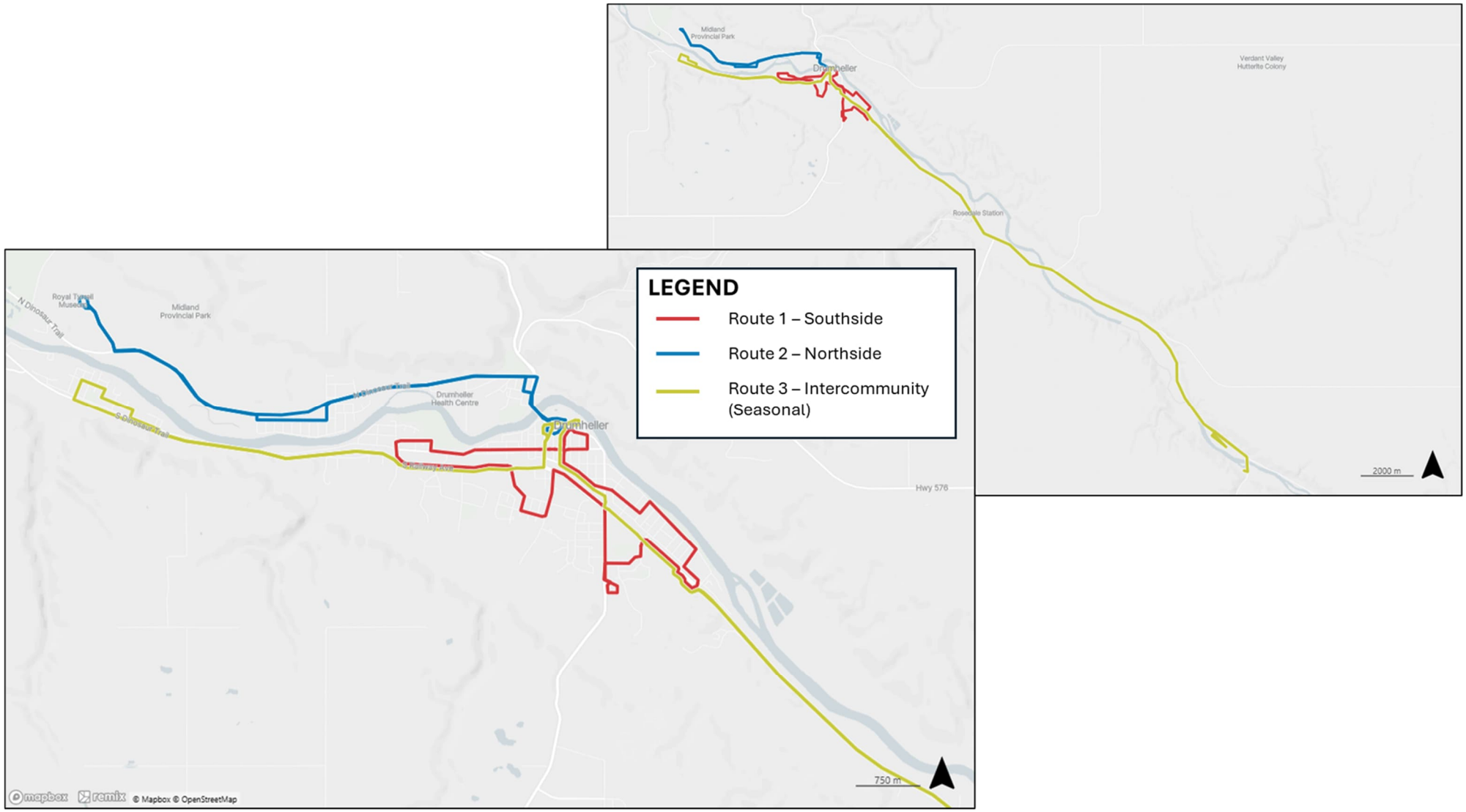
Table ES- 1: Overview of Public Transportation Options

Public Transportation Option Packages					
	Option 1: Fixed Route – Central Drumheller	**Option 2: Fixed route – Central Drumheller + Intercommunity**	**Option 3: Fixed Route – Central Drumheller + Limited Intercommunity**	**4: On-demand Transit**	**5: Community Partnership**
Service Structure	Fixed route connecting Royal Tyrrell and central Drumheller (Riverside – Newcastle)	Central fixed route + intercommunity route (Nacmine to East Coulee)	Central fixed route + limited intercommunity route (Nacmine to East Coulee)	On-demand rides available within Central Drumheller	Partner with community service orgs to leverage existing vehicles in community for a set number of days a week
Potential Service Change Structure	Switch to a flex route service	Switch to a flex route service, make intercommunity routes seasonal	Switch to a flex route service, make limited intercommunity routes seasonal	-	-
Frequency	Bus every 60-90 mins	Bus every 60-90 mins	Central Drumheller bus every 60-90 mins	Based on availability	Based on availability
Period of Operation	← Potential for weekday mid-day, weekday all day, or weekday + weekend service →				Periodic / Based on Availability

Table ES- 2: Multiple Account Evaluation for Proposed Options

○ - Very Poor ◔ - Poor ◑ - Moderate ◕ - Good ● – Very good		Option 1: Fixed Route – Central Drumheller	Option 2: Fixed Route – Central Drumheller + Intercommunity	Option 3: Fixed Route – Central Drumheller + Limited Intercommunity	Recommended Option 3: Fixed Route – Central Drumheller + Seasonal Intercommunity Service	Option 4: On-demand Transit	Option 5: Community Partnership
Service Performance & Reliability	**Coverage**	◑	●	◕	◕	●	To be determined
	Reliability	●	●	●	●	◔	○
	Travel Flexibility	◔	◔	◔	◔	●	○
	Trip Directness	◕	◕	◕	◕	◔	To be determined
	Frequency	60-90 minutes	60-90 minutes	Central Drumheller service 60-90 minutes, intercommunity service limited to twice a day	60-90 minutes	On-demand	As available
	Periods of Operation	7 am – 6 pm, M-F	7 am – 6 pm, M-F	7 am – 6 pm, M-F	7 am – 6 pm, M-F	7 am – 6 pm, M-F	2 days only (8 am to 4 pm)
	Accessibility	●	●	●	●	●	◔
	Walking Distance to Stop	◕	◕	◕	◕	●	◕
Operational Performance	**Estimated Annual Ridership**	8,300 to 15,400	14,400 to 27,500	9,800 to 18,400	9,300 – 17,400	8,300 to 15,400	800 to 2,500
	Vehicles Required	1 active 1 spare	2 active 1 spare	2 active 1 spare	2 active 1 spare	1 active 1 spare	1 active
Implementation & Scalability	**Ease of Implementation**	◕	◕	◕	◕	◕	●
	Operating Complexity	●	●	◑	◑	◕	◔
	Scalability	●	●	●	●	●	○
Cost & Financial Sustainability	**Capital Cost ($ to $$$$$)**	$$$	$$$$	$$$$	$$$$	$$$	$
	Estimated Annual Operating Cost	$330 - $360k (Weekday All-Day)	$710 - $750k (Weekday All-Day)	$430 - $470k (Weekday All-Day)	$357k- $383k (Weekday All-Day: Route 1 & 2 + Seasonal: Route 3)	$330 - $360k (Weekday All-Day)	$50 – 100k (1 – 2 days per week)

Figure ES- 1:Recommended Fixed Route Central Drumheller + Seasonal Intercommunity Service



Transit service is recommended to operate weekdays 7:00 AM – 6:00 PM with service every 90 minutes, draft services schedules for each route is provided in **Figure ES- 2** through **Figure ES- 4.** This option is projected to have an annual ridership between 9,300 and 17,400, assuming Route 3 operates during the summer period only.

Figure ES- 2: Route 1 Service Schedule

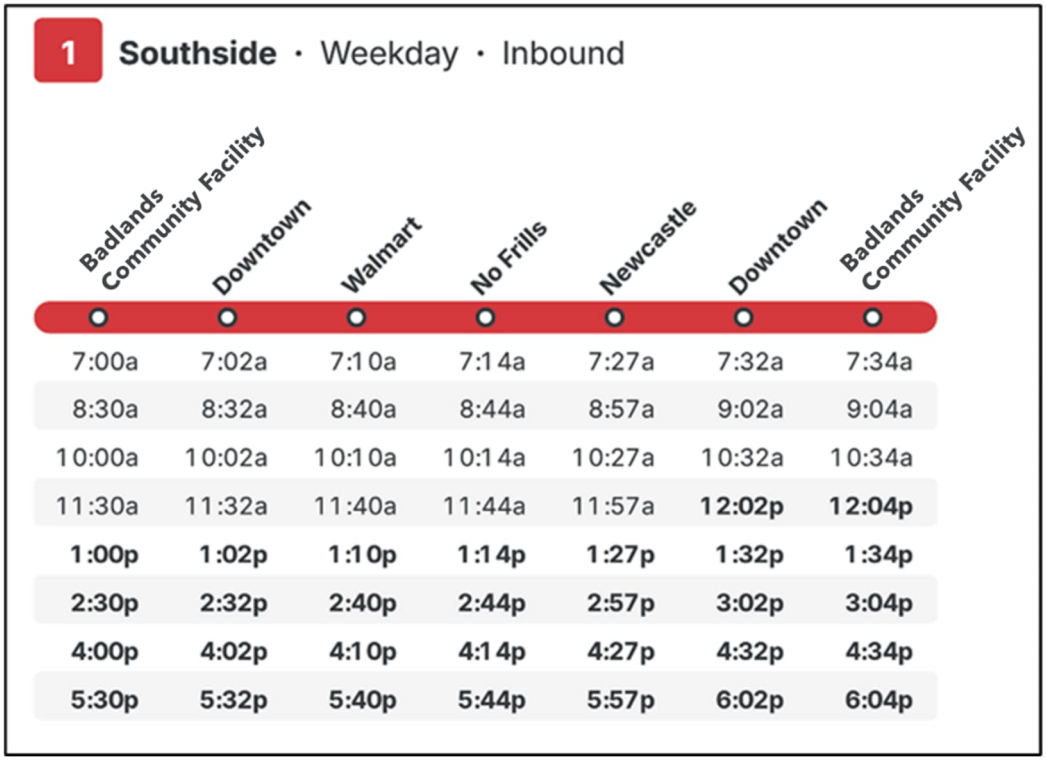


Figure ES- 3: Route 2 Service Schedule

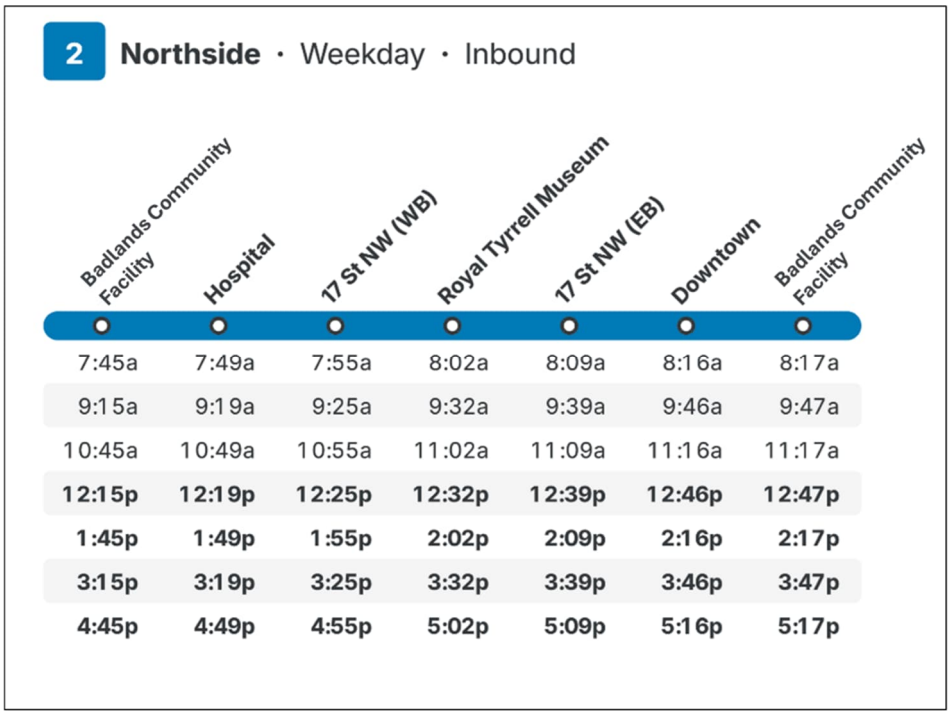
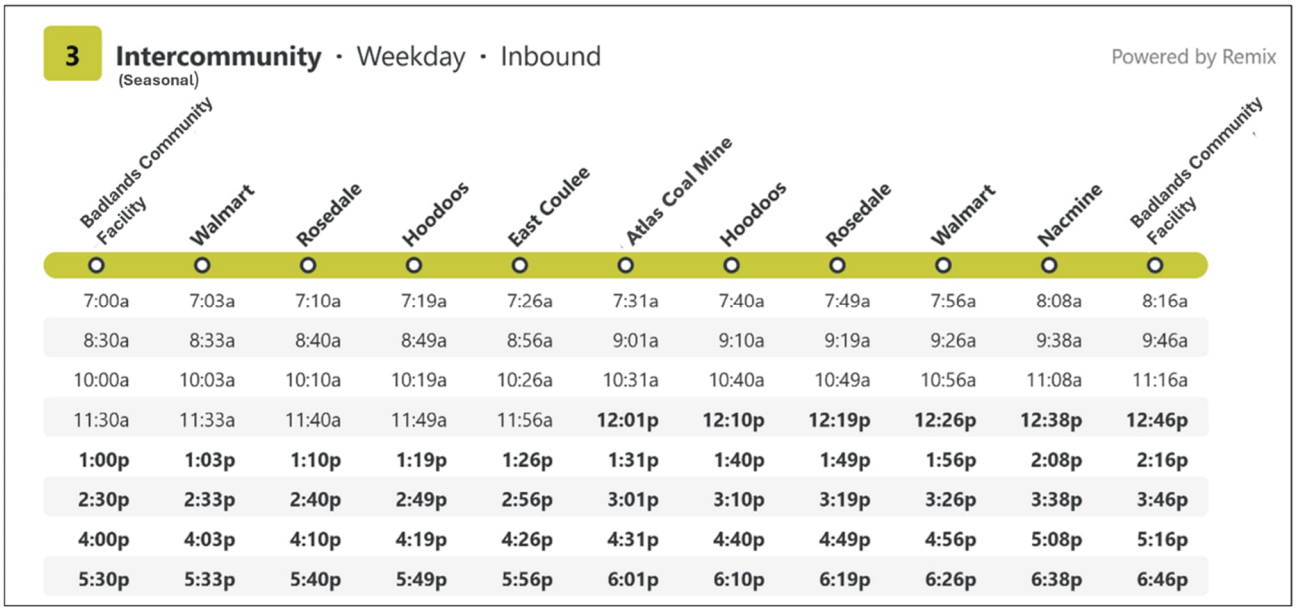


Figure ES- 4: Route 3 Service Schedule (July and August only)



Costs and Funding

Estimated capital costs are shown in **Table ES- 3**. Capital costs include vehicle acquisition ($1,485,000) and supporting infrastructure ($83,000), which combined is $1,568,000.

Table ES- 3: Estimated Capital Costs for Option 3 – Fixed Route Central Drumheller + Seasonal Intercommunity Service

Item	Units	# Of Units	Unit Cost	Total Per Item ($)
VEHICLES				
Passenger Minibus (Gasoline or Diesel)	Vehicles	1	$85,000	$85,000
35-Foot Bus (Diesel or Natural Gas)	Vehicles	2	$700,000	$1,400,000
SUPPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE				
Bus Stop Landing Pad (estimated)		10	$2,000	$20,000
Bus Stop ID Poll (estimated)		75	$200	$15,000
Bus Shelter and Bench		6	$8,000	$48,000
TOTAL				**$1,568,000**

Estimated annual operating costs are approximately $413,000 including fuel, maintenance and labour based on recommended service hours and peer-indexed all-inclusive rates as shown in **Table ES- 4.**

Table ES- 4: Annual Operating Costs for Option 3 – Fixed Route Central Drumheller + Seasonal Intercommunity Service

Annual Service Hours	3,440
Cost per Service Hour	$120
Annual Operating Cost Estimate	$413,000

Table ES- 5 summarizes key financials, expected revenues and operating costs for both low and high ridership projections.

Table ES- 5: Financial Performance for Option 3 – Fixed Route Central Drumheller + Seasonal Intercommunity Service

	Low	High
Ridership Projection (Routes 1 & 2)	**8,320**	**15,370**
Ridership Projection (Route 3)	**1,030**	**2,060**
Total Annual Revenue (Routes 1 &2)	$24,960	$46,110
Total Annual Revenue (Route 3)	$5,150	$10,300
Total Annual Revenue (System)	$30,110	$56,410
Operating Cost	$413,000	$413,000
Net Operating Cost	$382,890	$356,590
Cost Recovery	**8%**	**16%**
Cost per Capita	$48.41	$45.09

The projected cost recovery for Option 3 (approximately 8% to 16%) is generally consistent with the lower-to-mid range observed across peer municipalities, many of which fall between about 6% and 22%. Smaller or lower ridership systems that operate in municipalities such as Wawa, Clearview and Prince Edward County tend to have lower cost recovery (roughly 6%-8%), which align with Drumheller's lower ridership scenario, while systems with higher ridership (e.g., Elliot Lake or Nelson) achieve stronger recovery rates (see **Section 3.5.2**). Overall, this reflects the typical relationship where higher ridership helps improve cost recovery and suggests that Drumheller's projected performance is in line with comparable municipalities with similar scale and demand.

Scalability

Implementing a transit service represents a financial investment, and the recommended option has been designed to be flexible to reflect the Municipality's needs and available funding. Service levels can be adjusted over time, allowing the Municipality to start with a lower level of service and expand as demand and comfort with the system grow.

For example, service could initially focus on reduced operations for Routes 1 and 2 outside the summer season, while maintaining full service during peak months. This scenario would result in approximately

2,040 annual service hours and an estimated annual operating cost of $245,300, $111,290-$137,590 less than the full implementation recommended above.

A range of potential service levels and associated costs is outlined in **Table ES- 6**, illustrating how transit service can be scaled. Overall costs will vary depending on the level of service selected.

Table ES- 6: Overview of Transit Service Scalability

	Option 1: Fixed Route – Central Drumheller	*Option 2: Fixed Route – Central Drumheller + Intercommunity	Option 3: Fixed Route – Central Drumheller + Limited Intercommunity	Option 4: On-demand Transit	Option 5: Community Partnership
Service Period	**Service Hours (Annual Operating Cost $)**				
1 – 2 Days per Week (8 hours of service)	400 - 800 ($50-100k)	X	780 – 1,560 ($90 – 180k)	400 - 800 ($50-100k)	400 - 800 ($50-100k)
Weekday AM and PM Peaks Only	1,640 ($200k)	X	2,500 ($300k)	X	X
Weekday Midday Only	1,640 ($200k)	X	2,500 ($300k)	1,640 ($200k)	X
Weekday All-Day	2,900 ($350k)	6,000 ($730k)	3,800 ($450k)	2,900 ($350k)	X
Weekday All-Day + Weekend	4,200 ($500k)	8,800 ($1,050k)	5,500 ($660k)	4,200 ($500k)	X

Funding

There are significant funding opportunities available for the Municipality to support both capital or operational costs. A summary of the available funding is outlined in **Table ES- 7.**

Table ES- 7: Summary of Available Funding

Program Name	Purpose	Funding Available	Eligible Expenses
Canada Public Transit Fund Targeted Funding Stream	Enhance public transit nationwide	$3 billion annually across Canada	Major projects, system maintenance, active transportation infrastructure

Program Name	Purpose	Funding Available	Eligible Expenses
Rural Transit Solutions Fund	Support rural, remote and indigenous transit services	Up to $10 million per project (capital stream)	Vehicles, infrastructure, accessibility features, start up costs

Implementation

A draft implementation plan is outlined in **Table ES- 8** to provide guidance to the community on the time required to launch a service. The implementation timeline may need to be modified to align with the RTSF intake period which is unknown at this time.

Table ES- 8: Implementation Plan

Activities	Q1 Year 1	Q2 Year 1	Q3 Year 1	Q4 Year 1	Q1 Year 2	Q2 Year 2	Q3 Year 2	Q4 Year 2
Council Endorsement								
Funding Applications								
Service Procurement								
Contract Award								
Marketing and Education								
Service Launch								

1. Introduction

Drumheller is a growing community and major tourist destination, with transportation needs influenced by both residents and visitors. At present Drumheller does not have a conventional public transit system. The community's large geographic area, low population density and limited transportation options have resulted in a strong reliance on private vehicles. These conditions create challenges for accessing employment, services and destinations without access to a vehicle.

The Transit Feasibility Study ("the Study") is being undertaken on behalf of Travel Drumheller, as the community's tourism plan, the Destination Development Plan, identifies a lack of transportation as a barrier to economic growth in tourism. The Study was undertaken as part of the Valley Connect project. This study examines whether public transportation could address identified gaps by assessing a range of transit service models, including flexible and on-demand options, that reflect Drumheller's community context, transportation needs, and resource considerations. The findings of the Study are intended to inform future planning and decision-making related to transit and mobility in Drumheller.

1.1 Background

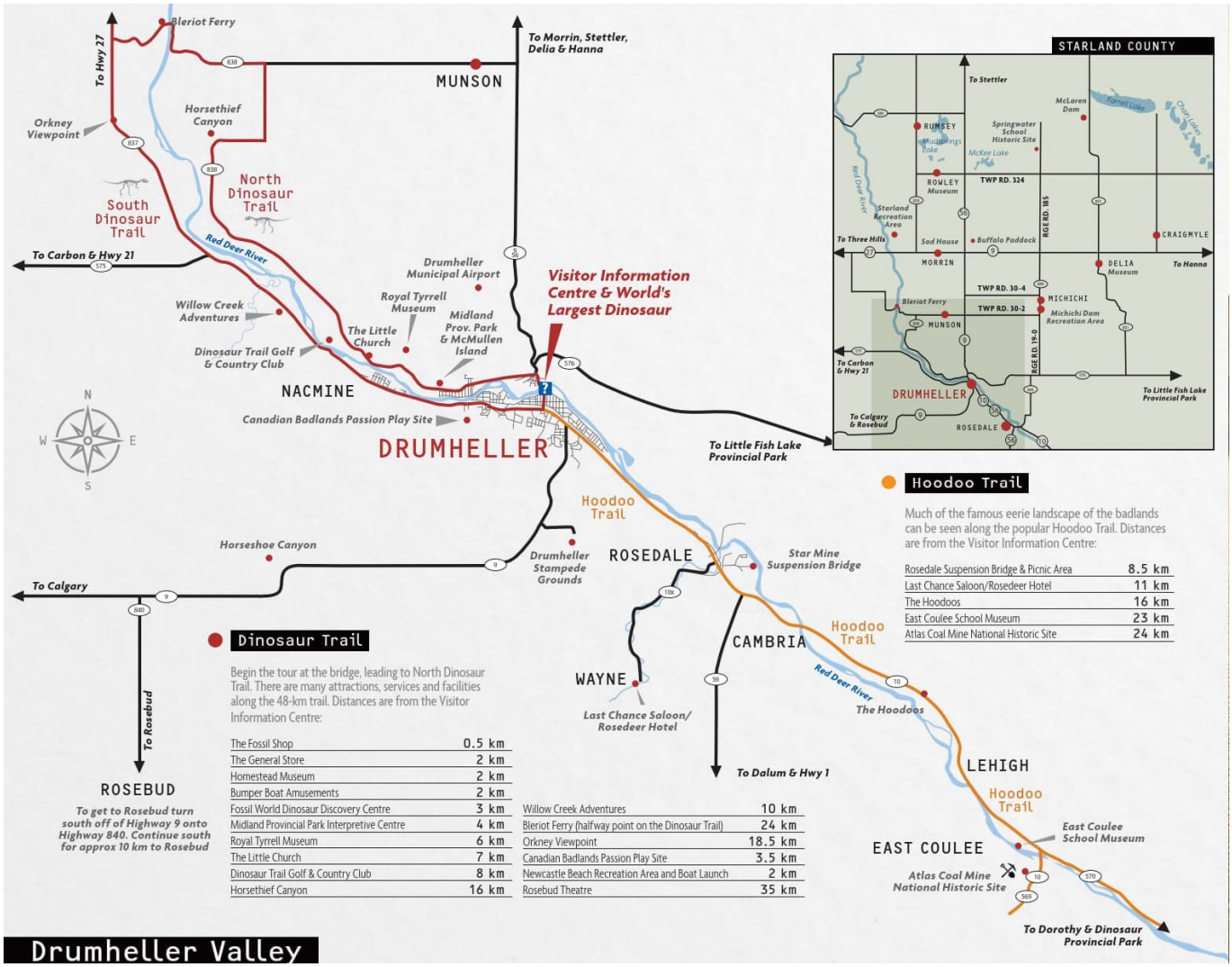
The Town of Drumheller is located on the Red Deer River in the Badlands of east-central Alberta covering roughly 108km^2. It is about 110 kilometres northeast of Calgary and is situated along the stretch of the Red Deer Valley known as "Dinosaur Valley". While the surrounding landscape is largely agricultural, Drumheller functions as the region's primary urban centre and serves a population beyond its municipal boundary.

The community was originally established around coal mining, with many of its early settlements tied to mine sites throughout the valley. As mining and other industries have declined over time, the Town's economy shifted toward tourism which was supported by the Badlands landscape, paleontological history, and key destinations such as the Royal Tyrrell Museum. Today the Town attracts hundreds and thousands of visitors each year.

The Town's geography reflects a highly linear development pattern. Communities are spread along a single primary corridor within the narrow river valley. Drumheller has absorbed numerous former hamlets. As a result the Town of Drumheller now includes Cambria, East Coulee, Lehigh, Nacmine, Wayne, Bankview, Midland, Newcastle, Rosedale, and Willow Creek.

A map of Drumheller is shown in **Figure 1-1**, illustrating the Town's linear layout within the valley and the distribution of its various communities.

Figure 1-1: Map of Drumheller



Source: Travel Drumheller

1.2 Objective of the Study

The objective of the Study is to assess the feasibility of introducing a public transit service or alternative transportation model in the Town of Drumheller. The Study examines what a transit system could look like in the local context, with a focus on meeting community needs while considering the financial and logistical requirements of implementation. Through a structured evaluation of service options, the Study aims to identify a practical and sustainable approach to public transit in Drumheller.

Specifically, the Study aims to:

- Identify community needs and existing conditions, including current travel patterns, access challenges and the unique needs of residents and visitors
- Evaluate a range of public transit service models that could be suitable for Drumheller, considering different service types, coverage areas, and operational approaches.

- Assess the financial and logistical feasibility of implementing a new transit system, including operating considerations and long-term sustainability.
- Identify a preferred transit option that best balances community needs, technical feasibility, and financial practicality.

2. Stakeholder and Public Engagement

2.1 Who was Consulted

Consultation and engagement activities were undertaken to understand the local context, identify travel needs and preferences, and gather input to inform the development of potential transit options in Drumheller. Engagement included the following audiences:

- **Stakeholder Groups:** From the outset of the Study, a select group of representatives from key organizations were engaged to provide and inform the planning process, including:
    - Brooks and County Immigration Services
    - Drumheller and District Chamber of Commerce
    - Drumheller and Region Transition Society
    - Drumheller Health Centre
    - Greentree Elementary School
    - Royal Tyrrell Museum
    - St. Anthony's School
    - Town of Drumheller Staff
- **General public:** Residents and community members provided insights on existing travel barriers and ideas of what they would like to see incorporated into a potential public transportation system in Drumheller.

2.2 Overview of Consultation

As part of the consultation and engagement program developed for the Study, in person and online methods were utilized. These included open houses, interviews and an online survey designed to accommodate diverse needs and preferences. The approach enabled the collection of a wide range of perspectives and insights. The engagement process was carried out in two phases as described below. Consultation highlights are presented in **Section 3.4** and **Section 4.4**.

2.3 Description of Phases

Phase 1

The first phase of engagement focused on developing an understanding of the existing transportation conditions in Drumheller, including current travel patterns, barriers and opportunities for public transportation. Engagement activities included interviews with Town staff, service providers and

community organizations to understand local priorities, challenges and opportunities related to public transportation. Furthermore, a transit survey was conducted to gather information from residents on travel behaviours, preferences and attitudes toward a potential public transportation system.

Phase 2

The second round of engagement focused on evaluating public transportation service options that could potentially be implemented to serve the Drumheller. An Open House was held to help gather input from the public to help shape the recommended public transit option.

2.4 Timetable of Consultation

The consultation process encompassed the following meetings and activities outlined in **Table 2-1**.

Table 2-1: Overview of Consultation and Engagement Activities

Meeting	Format	Date
Stakeholder Interviews	Online	November 2025 – December 2025
Community Transit Survey	Online and Hardcopy	September 2025 – November 2025
Public Open House	In-person	February 25, 2026

3. Existing Conditions and Needs Assessment

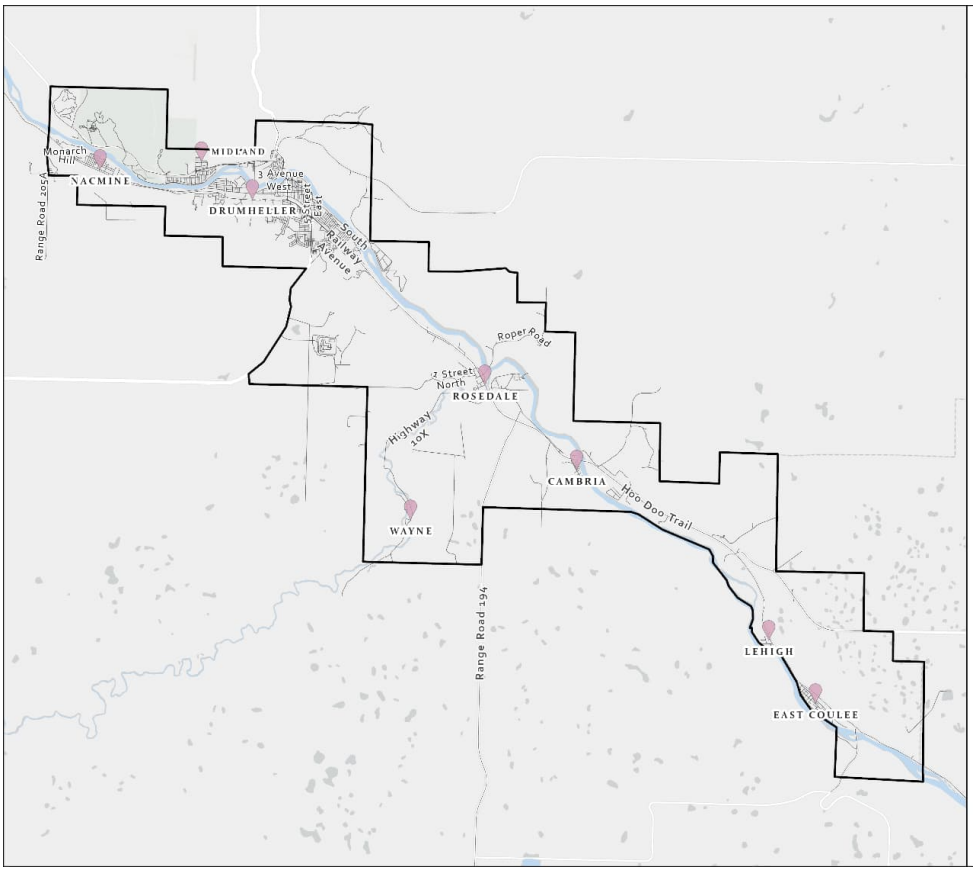
This section provides an overview of the existing transportation context in Drumheller. It begins with a review of relevant municipal and community planning documents intended to establish the policy framework for considering potential public transportation options. A demographic overview examines population size, distribution, age groups, and key trends, while a socio-economic review considers factors such as employment patterns, income levels, and community characteristics. Together this information establishes baseline conditions and identifies key challenges and opportunities that inform the development and evaluation of potential transportation service options for Drumheller.

3.1 Community Layout and Land Use

Drumheller has a mix of residential, commercial, institutional and tourism related land uses spread across a large geographic area. Residential neighbourhoods are distributed throughout the municipality, while commercial and institutional uses are more concentrated in the downtown area and along key arterial corridors, where many local services, employment uses and community facilities are located.

Land use in Drumheller is also shaped by its role as a major tourism destination, with attractions and accommodations located within the town and in surrounding areas. The community's linear development pattern dispersed residential areas, and separation between key destinations contribute to longer travel distances and a strong reliance on private vehicles. These characteristics are important considerations when identifying potential public transportation service areas. **Figure 3-1** illustrates communities and destinations in Drumheller.

Figure 3-1: Map of Drumheller

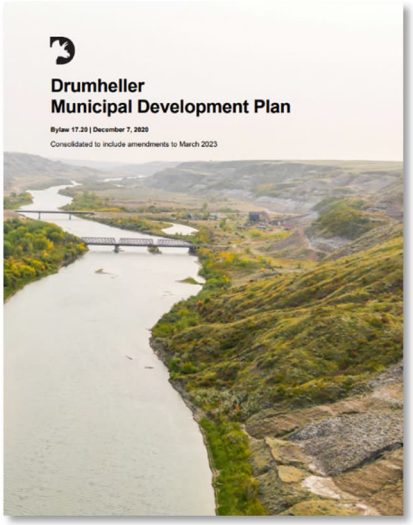


3.2 Policy and Study Review

To support the development of potential transit solutions this section highlights the key municipal policies and plans that influence transportation planning in Drumheller. The review identifies existing objectives, priorities and requirements that will shape the feasibility and design of any future transportation service.

Drumheller Municipal Development Plan (2020)

The Drumheller Municipal Development Plan (MDP) sets out a comprehensive, long-term vision for growth and development over the next 30 years. It establishes priorities for land use, infrastructure and community services while preserving Drumheller's unique character. As the guiding framework for all other Town Plans and Strategies, the MDP provides policy direction on future land use, growth development and transportation systems.



The MDP includes goals and objectives to help Drumheller become "a place to grow and discover". Regarding transportation, the MDP notes the need to enhance Valley-wide transportation systems to expand mobility options and provide a range of choices for travel within Drumheller. Objectives for this goal include:

- Increasing the mode share of active and alternative transportation.
- Supporting the development of regional transportation connections to Drumheller.

The MDP envisions a shift from a predominately auto-oriented transportation model to one that supports a higher share of alternative and active modes. It emphasizes that Drumheller's network should ensure connectivity and access for all modes. Policies supporting these transportation goals include:

- Support the provision of regional transit connections.
- Consider the provision of transit service, particularly to address the needs of youth and young adults.

Destination Development Plan (2023)

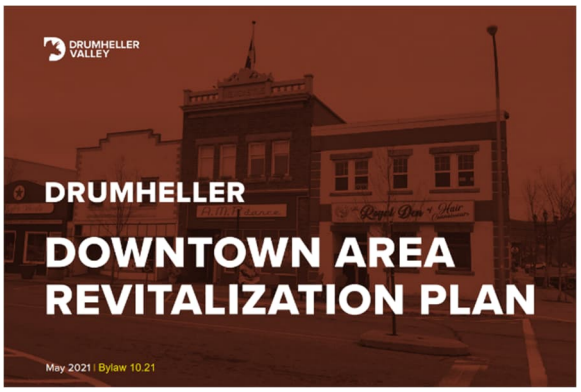
The Destination Development Plan (DDP) provides a comprehensive framework to guide the long-term planning and development of Drumheller and the surrounding region as a tourism destination. Its mission is to generate significant economic and social benefits for residents, businesses and visitors through strategic destination development.

A key part of the DDP involved identifying challenges that affect tourism in the region. One significant challenge is the limited availability of public transportation, both for travel to Drumheller and within the surrounding area. This issue creates several barriers:

- Restricted market access: Transportation barriers reduce access to regional and international markets, limiting opportunities to attract higher-yield markets where revenues could more easily be optimized.
- Staffing difficulties: Contributes to staffing shortages as staff cannot access reliable public transportation
- Visitor experience limitations: Tourists without personal vehicles have fewer opportunities to explore and fully experience the region.

Recognizing this challenge, the DDP establishes strategic pillars and supporting initiatives aimed at improving tourism revenue, profitability and overall liveability for residents. One key pillar focuses on long-term tourism prosperity, with an initiative to address transportation gaps in and around Drumheller. As part of this initiative, the DDP states that Travel Drumheller will collaborate with key tourism stakeholders and the Ministry of Transportation to explore and implement solutions that expand transportation options to and within the Drumheller region.

Drumheller Downtown Area Revitalization Plan (2021)



The Drumheller Downtown Area Revitalization Plan (DARP) establishes a 15-year vision and strategy for revitalizing downtown Drumheller. Its vision is to create a vibrant downtown that serves as the heart of the valley, featuring active public spaces, diverse businesses, strong community connections and links to the river and Badlands.

The plan is structured around five pillars:

- The Heart of Public Life – Enhancing downtown as a central gathering place with high-quality public spaces.
- A Place to Discover – Positioning downtown as a key destination for visitors and a starting point for exploring the valley.
- A Prosperous Centre for Business – Supporting local business development and reducing vacancies.
- A Growing Community – Increasing residential presence and improving accessibility for daily needs.
- A Landscape Connection – Strengthening connections between downtown and surrounding natural features including the river and trail systems.

These pillars emphasize accessibility as a key factor in achieving the plan's objectives. Increased activity downtown, improved visitor experience, and support for businesses and residents depend on safe and convenient connections.

The DARP includes a mobility policy section that sets out the intent to improve connectivity and safety for all modes of transportation along downtown corridors. This includes active modes such as walking, cycling, paddling, as well as vehicular travel. The plan states that all streets within downtown should function as complete streets, designed to accommodate all transportation modes.

Town of Drumheller Transit Feasibility (2009)

In 2009, the Town of Drumheller completed a comprehensive Transit Feasibility Study prepared by iTRANS Consulting Inc. to assess existing public transportation services and evaluate options for introducing fixed-route transit within the community. At the time of the study, transportation was primarily provided by the Valley Bus Society (VBS), which operated a demand-responsive, door-to-door service serving residents who were unable to drive, as well as residents 50 years and older.

The 2009 study examined the performance and sustainability of the existing VBS services and assessed opportunities to introduce additional transit services to meet community needs. The study noted that Drumheller's low population density and largely rural context presents challenges for a conventional transit service, requiring a tailored approach to public transit service development.

Key findings of the 2009 Transit Feasibility Study are as follows:

- Demand for VBS services was expected to increase as the population aged, with corresponding implications.
- Reliance solely on demand responsive transit services presented limitations in addressing broader community transportation needs, particularly as demand and costs increased.
- Introducing transit services accessible to all residents had the potential to reduce pressure on specialized door-to-door services while expanding mobility options for the broader population.

Recommended Service Model

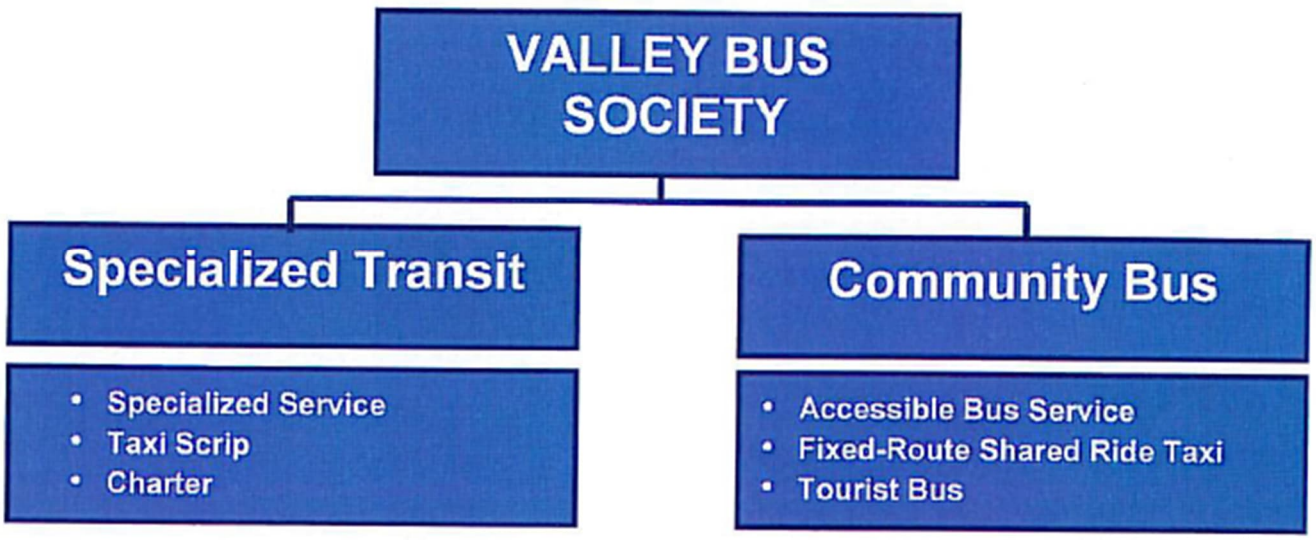
The 2009 study recommended a combined service model intended to respond to increasing demand for VBS services while improving access to transportation for residents who did not qualify for door-to-door service. Rather than relying on a single transit service, the study proposed a set of service recommendations as follows:

- **Community Bus Service:** This service should run within the urban area of Drumheller and be available to all residents. The routing of the service would also serve the neighbouring communities of Midland and Nacmine on alternating trips, providing scheduled service beyond the urban core. Furthermore, this service would be available for use as a tourist charter during the tourist season when not in scheduled operation.
- **Fixed Route Taxi Service for Outlying Communities:** To provide services to areas outside the urban core, the study recommended introducing a fixed route taxi service connecting East Coulee to Drumheller. This service would operate minimum service hours on selected days at start-up and be expanded overtime as demand warrants.
- **Taxi Scrip Program:** The study recommended implementing the taxi scrip program to provide transportation for eligible VBS customers during non VBS operating hours. Eligible users would receive 50% fare subsidy, with the remainder of the fare paid by the customer. This service would supplement existing transit operations outside of regular service hours.
- **Specialized Transit (Valley Bus):** One wheelchair accessible vehicle would be dedicated to the VBS demand-responsive, door-to-door service, ensuring continued provision of specialized transit for eligible users.

Recommended Governance and Administration

To support the recommended transit services, a formal governance and administrative structure that built on the existing role of the VBS while increasing oversight and coordination by the Town of Drumheller was proposed. The recommended governance model is shown in **Figure 3-2**.

Figure 3-2: Recommended Governance Model



Source: Town of Drumheller Transit Feasibility Study 2009

The study recommended that the VBS be expanded to deliver both specialized and public transit services under a single service provider model. Under this structure VBS would be responsible for operating:

- Specialized, demand-responsive, door-to-door transit services;
- The community bus fixed route service;
- The fixed route shared ride taxi service serving outlying communities;
- The taxi scrip program; and
- Charter and tourist-related transit services.

The study noted that this approach would build on VBS's existing operational experience while allowing transit services to be coordinated under one organization.

To improve clarity and accountability, the study recommended establishing two separate budgets within the VBS:

- A specialized transit budget covering:
    - Demand-responsive, door-to-door services;
    - Out-of-town medical trips; and
    - Taxi scrip services; and
- A public transit budget, covering:
    - Community bus services;
    - Fixed route shared ride taxi services; and

- Public charter and tourist services.

This separation is intended to clearly distinguish specialized transit services from services available to the general public and to better track costs and funding sources.

While service delivery was recommended to remain with the VBS, the study emphasized the need for coordination with the Town. It is recommended that the Town appoint a staff member to serve as a liaison between the Town and VBS to provide oversight of transit initiatives, support coordination between transit operations and municipal budgeting, assist with funding applications and ensure services are aligned with the Town's objectives and financial capacity.

The 2009 study positioned Valley Bus as a critical component of Drumheller's transportation system, particularly in delivering specialized, demand-responsive service for residents with higher mobility needs. At the same time, the study identified limitations in relying solely on door-to-door service to meet broader, community-wide travel demand, noting that such services are resource-intensive and less effective for accommodating routine trips such as employment, shopping, and recreation.

The recommended approach in 2009 was to complement specialized transit services with additional public-facing transit options, allowing each service to play a more focused and effective role within the overall system. This distinction remains relevant today and provides important context for considering how existing and future services can work together to meet the full range of community mobility needs.

Overall, the 2009 Transit Feasibility Study set out a framework for expanding transit services in Drumheller, combining specialized transit with new fixed route and semi-fixed services supported by an expanded governance role for the VBS and increased municipal oversight. These recommendations provide important background for understanding previous transit planning and help inform the direction of the current Transit Feasibility Study.

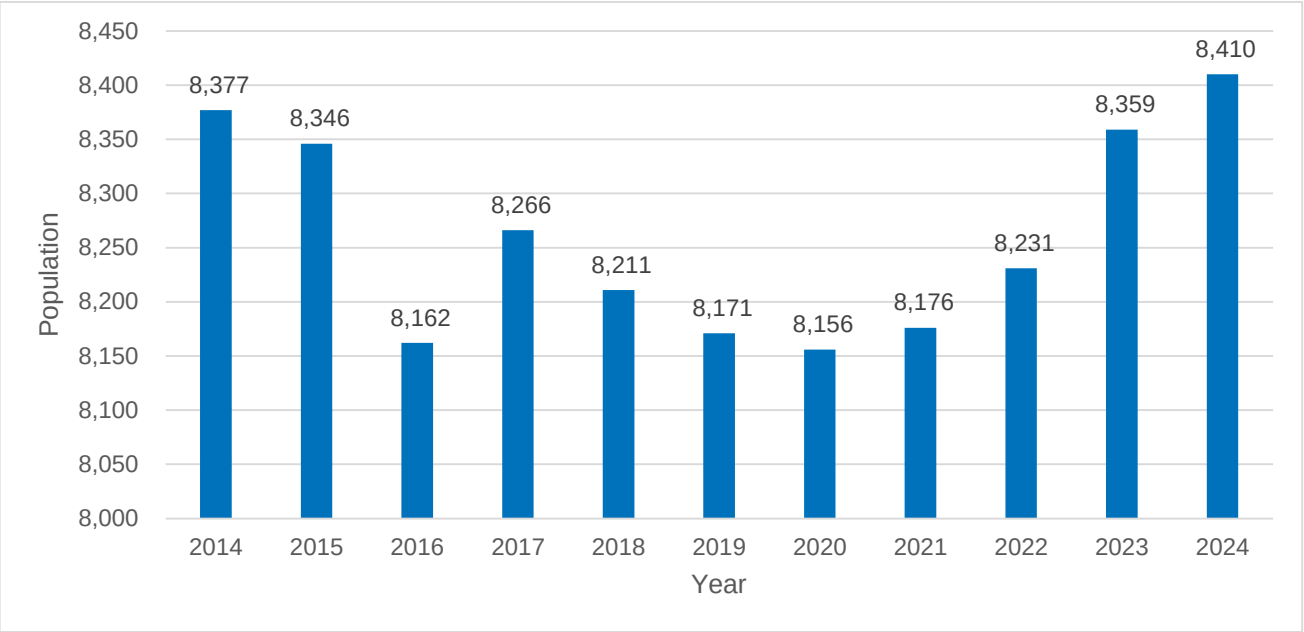
3.3 Community Profile and Current Travel Context

Analysing socio-economic and demographic characteristics of Drumheller is an important step in developing an effective Transit Feasibility Study. This data provides insight into who lives in the community, how they travel and what barriers they may face in accessing transportation. This section highlights current demographic, socio-economic and travel patterns in Drumheller drawing from the 2021 Census produced by Census Canada and other government sources.

3.3.1 Population Profile

Population growth is a key factor in evaluating the performance of the existing transit network and planning for future service needs. **Figure 3-3** illustrates Drumheller's historical population from 2014 to 2024, showing a generally stable population with minor fluctuations over the past decade. Between 2014 and 2020, the Town experienced a modest decline from 8,377 to 8,156 residents, followed by a gradual recovery in recent years, reaching 8,410 in 2024. Overall, Drumheller's population has remained steady over the past ten years, reflecting a balanced community with limited net growth but signs of stabilization and renewal in the post-2020 period.

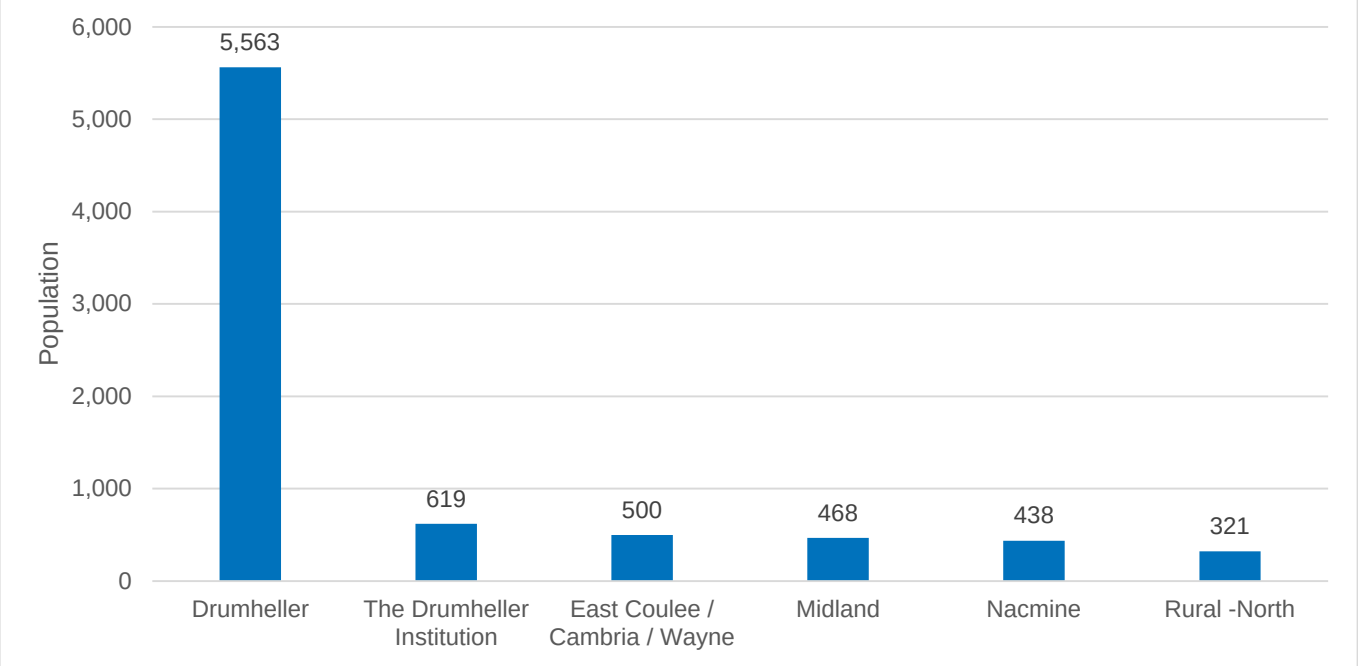
Figure 3-3: Overview of Drumheller's Population



Source: Office of Statistics and Information, Alberta Treasury Board and Finance, 2025

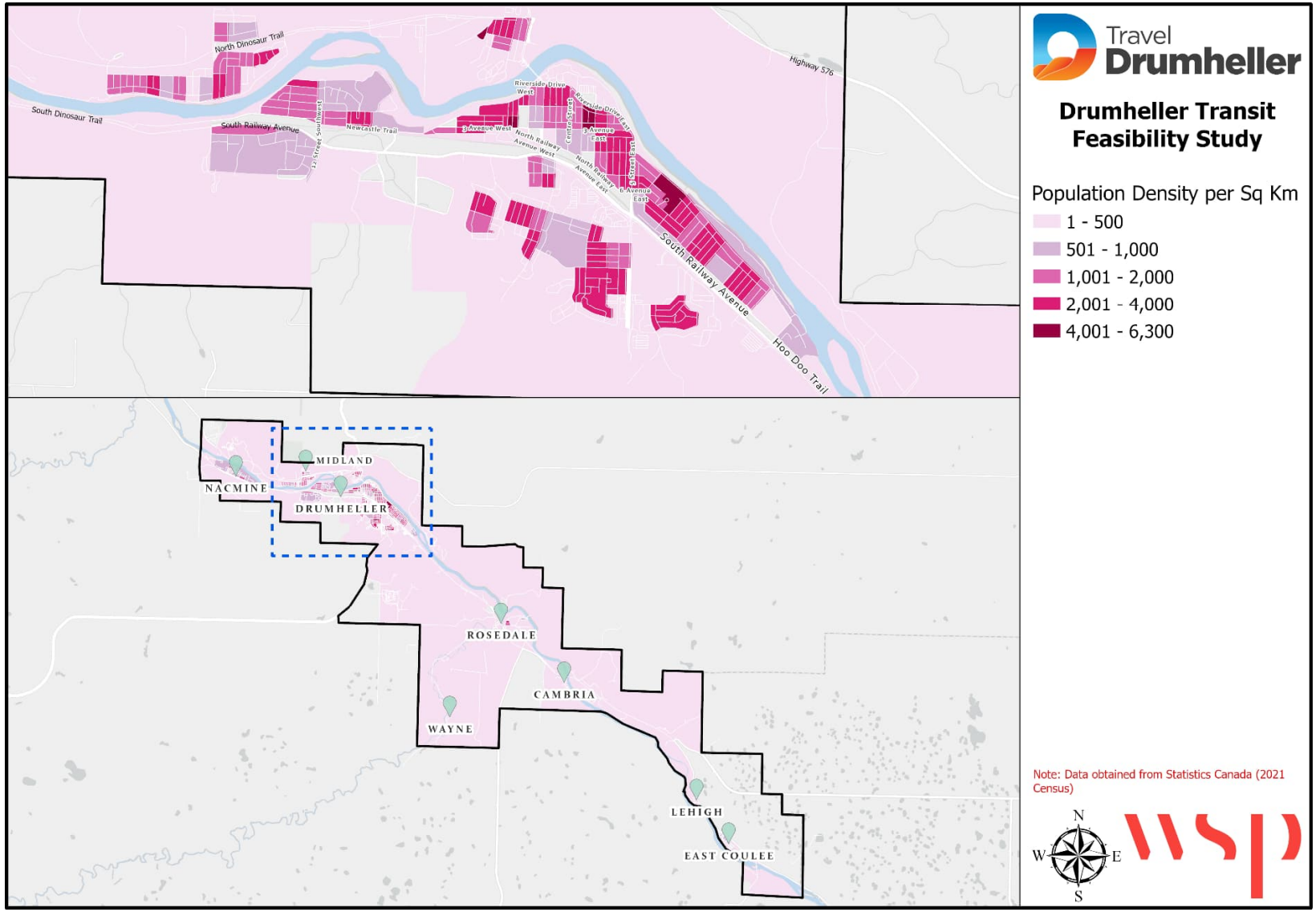
Figure 3-4 displays the population breakdown within the municipality while **Figure 3-5** shows the population concentrations on a map. As displayed, population is concentrated in the municipal core while historic townsites, predominantly near old mines, retain smaller concentrations. Within the core, population densities are highest near Downtown, in Newcastle, and portions of Riverside.

Figure 3-4: Overview of Population across Drumheller and Communities



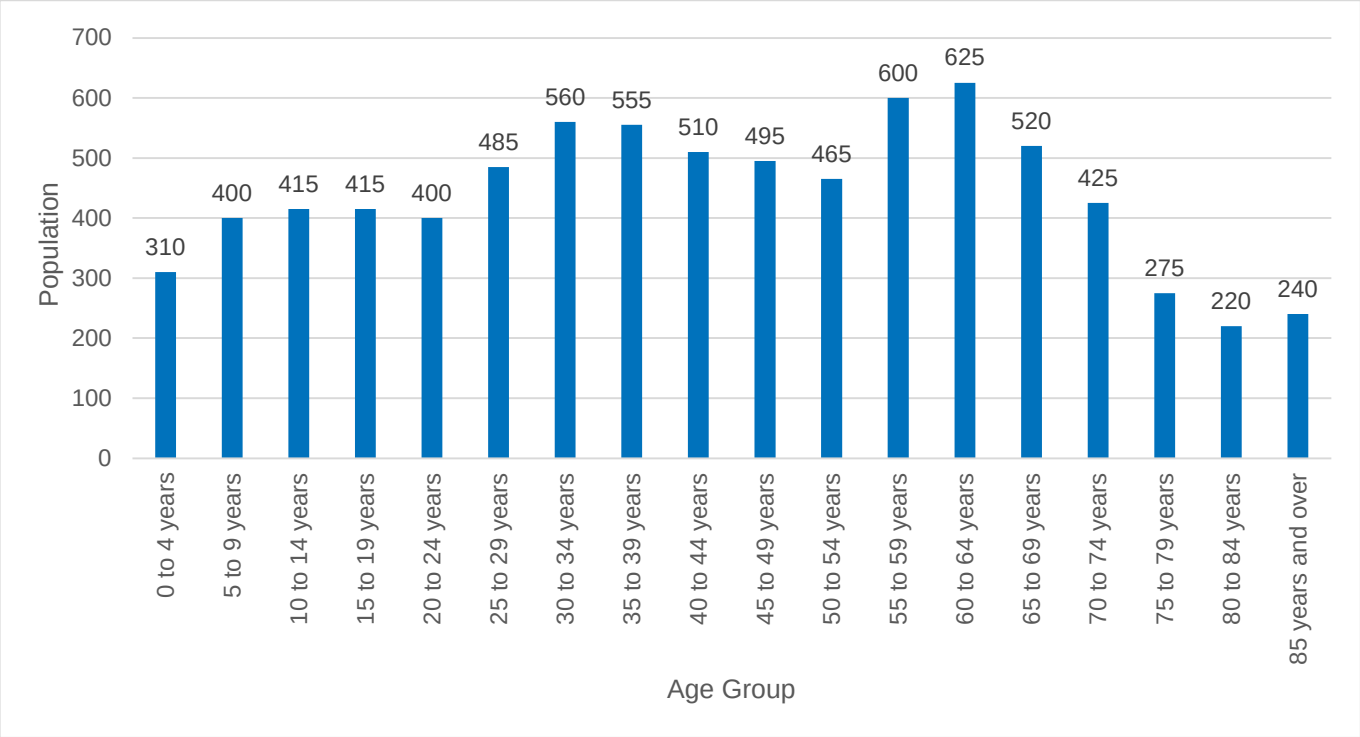
Source: Statistics Canada, 2021

Figure 3-5: Drumheller's Population Distribution



As presented in **Figure 3-6** the data shows a large concentration of older residents in Drumheller, with approximately 37% of the population 55 or older, indicating over one third of the community is at or nearing retirement. In contrast, about 19% of residents are 19 or younger, compared to the provincial average of 25%. This age structure highlights an older population profile overall with fewer youth and children relative to seniors.

Figure 3-6: Drumheller's Age Distribution

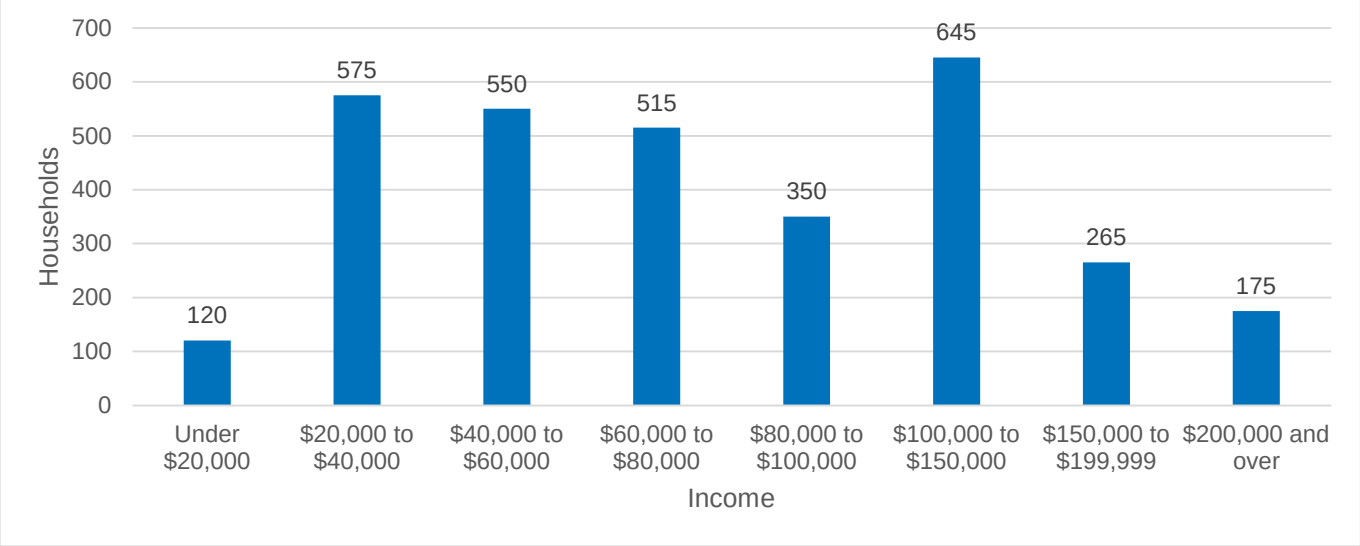


Source: Statistics Canada, 2021

3.3.2 Economic Profile

According to the 2021 Census, the average total household income in Drumheller is approximately $74,500, significantly lower than the Alberta provincial average of $96,000. **Figure 3-7** illustrates the distribution of household income across the town, showing that around 34% of households earn more than $100,000 annually, while approximately 39% fall below the $60,000 threshold. The prevalence of low-income households in Drumheller is 10.4%, which is slightly higher than the provincial average of 9.2% but lower than the national average of 11.1%.

Figure 3-7: Drumheller's Average Household Income

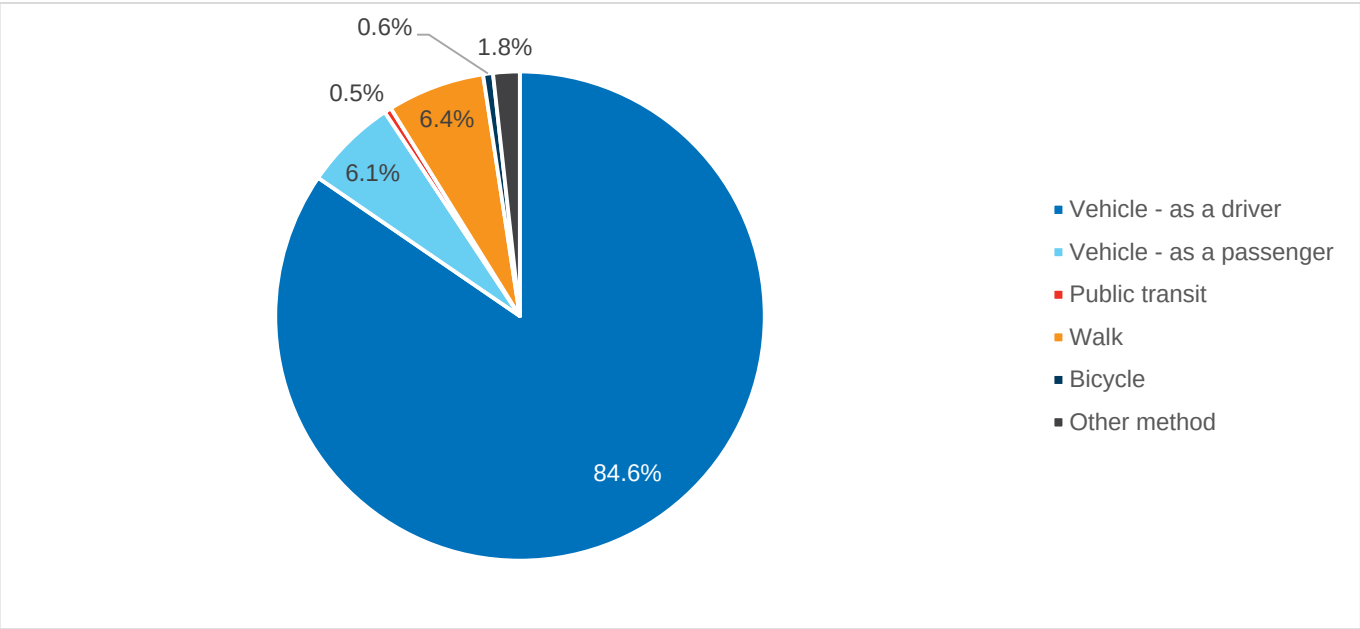


Source: Statistics Canada, 2021

3.3.3 Current Travel Context

Drumheller remains a highly car-dependent community. According to the 2021 Statistics Canada Census (see **Figure 3-8**), approximately 90.7% of trips to work or school are made using a personal vehicle, 84.6% as drivers, and an additional 6.1% through carpooling. 6.4% of residents walk, while 0.6% cycle and 0.5% use public transit as their primary mode of transportation. These figures highlight the relatively limited role of alternative transportation modes and suggest an opportunity to grow non-auto mode shares.

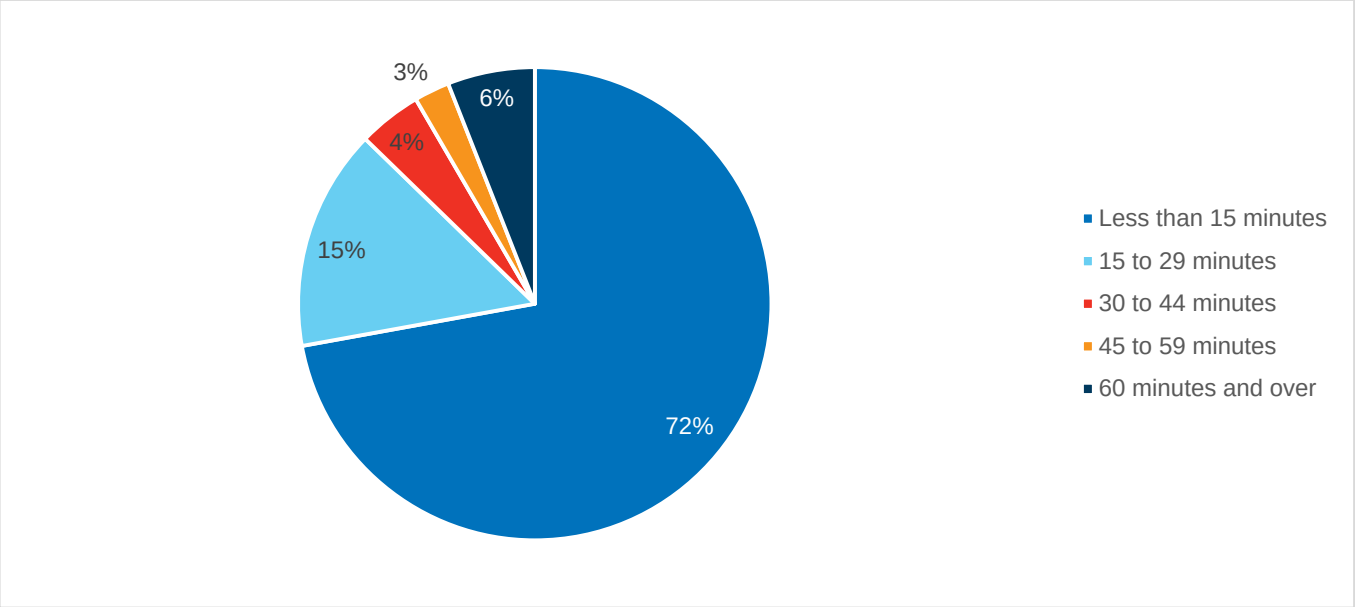
Figure 3-8: Drumheller's Mode Share Breakdown



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021

Drumheller resident commute trips are relatively short. 87% of commute trips originating in Drumheller are under 30 minutes, with 72% under 15 minutes, and another 15% between 15 and 29 minutes (see **Figure 3-9**). This suggests that many trips could be viable candidates for alternative modes such as transit, cycling, or walking if service levels and infrastructure supported those choices.

Figure 3-9: Overview of Commute Distance and Duration



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021

3.3.4 Existing Transportation

While the Municipality does not currently have its own public transit service, not-for-profit and private operators transport individuals around the community. A summary of these services is provided below.

Valley Bus

The Valley Bus Society is a nonprofit organization which operates the Valley Bus, which has been in operation since 1984. Valley Bus provides low cost, accessible transportation for senior citizens and persons requiring assistance and connects Drumheller to surrounding communities. Valley Bus services are contracted out to Bubba T's Bus Tours and Shuttle Service and operate Monday to Friday. Valley Bus operates a dial-a-bus style service where a driver will be dispatched to the customer's door and will bring them to their destination.

Table 3-1 provides a summary of the Valley Bus Society rates as of April 2024.

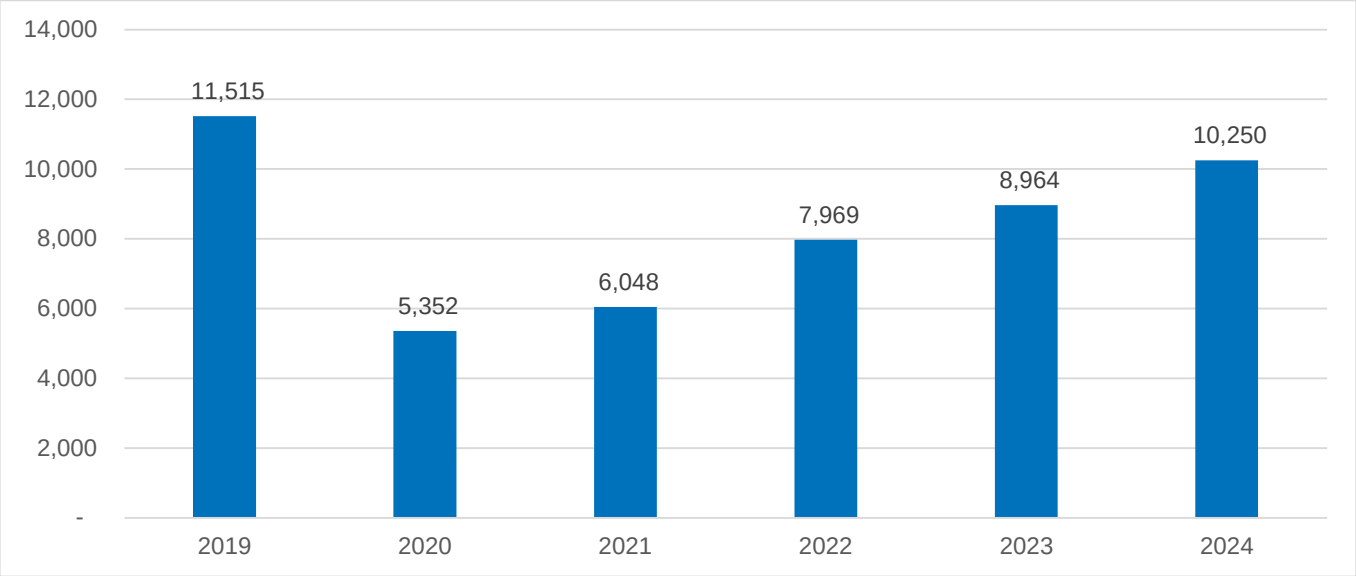
Table 3-1: Valley Bus Rates

Community	Cost
Drumheller (in town)	$7.00
Nacmine	$10.00
Midland	$10.00
Rosedale	$10.00
Wayne	$12.00
East Coulee	$16.00
Munson	$16.00
Dalum	$21.00
Morrin	$26.00
Michichi	$26.00
Dorothy	$31.00
Rosebud	$31.00
Delia	$46.00

Source: The Valley Bus Society – Drumheller, Facebook

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Valley Bus experienced the highest level of ridership, carrying 11,515 passengers in 2015 (or an average of approximately 45 rides per weekday). Ridership dropped sharply in 2020, consistent with trends experienced across the transit industry. However, as shown in **Figure 3-10**, ridership has been steadily recovering each year since, reaching 10,250 rides in 2024 (approximately 40 rides per weekday) which is approaching pre-pandemic levels.

Figure 3-10: Valley Bus Historical Ridership



Source: Town of Drumheller Committee of the Whole Council Meeting, November 12, 2024.

Valley Bus has provided transportation services in Drumheller and continues to play and important role in meeting community needs. As documented in the Town of Drumheller Transit Feasibility Study completed in 2009, Valley Bus was established as a not-for-profit service delivering demand-responsive, door-to-door transportation primarily for seniors and residents who are unable to drive or require assistance. The service functions as a specialized transit system rather than a conventional public transit service, with eligibility criteria and operating practices designed to support users with higher individual mobility needs.

The 2009 study identified that Valley Bus is well suited to providing accessible, individualized transportation but is not intended to serve general travel demand across the broader community. Door-to-door demand-responsive services are resource intensive and become less effective when used to accommodate routine, community wide trips such as shopping, employment or recreational travel. At the time of the study it was noted that relying on Valley Bus to meet broader transportation needs placed increasing pressure on service capacity and operating costs, particularly as the population aged and demand continued to grow.

The study concluded that Valley Bus operates most effectively when focused on specialized role, and that broader community mobility needs are more appropriately addressed through complementary public transit services designed to serve general travel demand. This distinction between specialized transportation and community-wide transit forms an important consideration in planning future mobility solutions for Drumheller.

Taxi Service

In 2025, the following taxi services operated in Drumheller:

- Reliable Taxi (24 hour service)
- Raptor Cabs
- Drumheller Tuk Tuk Taxi Services

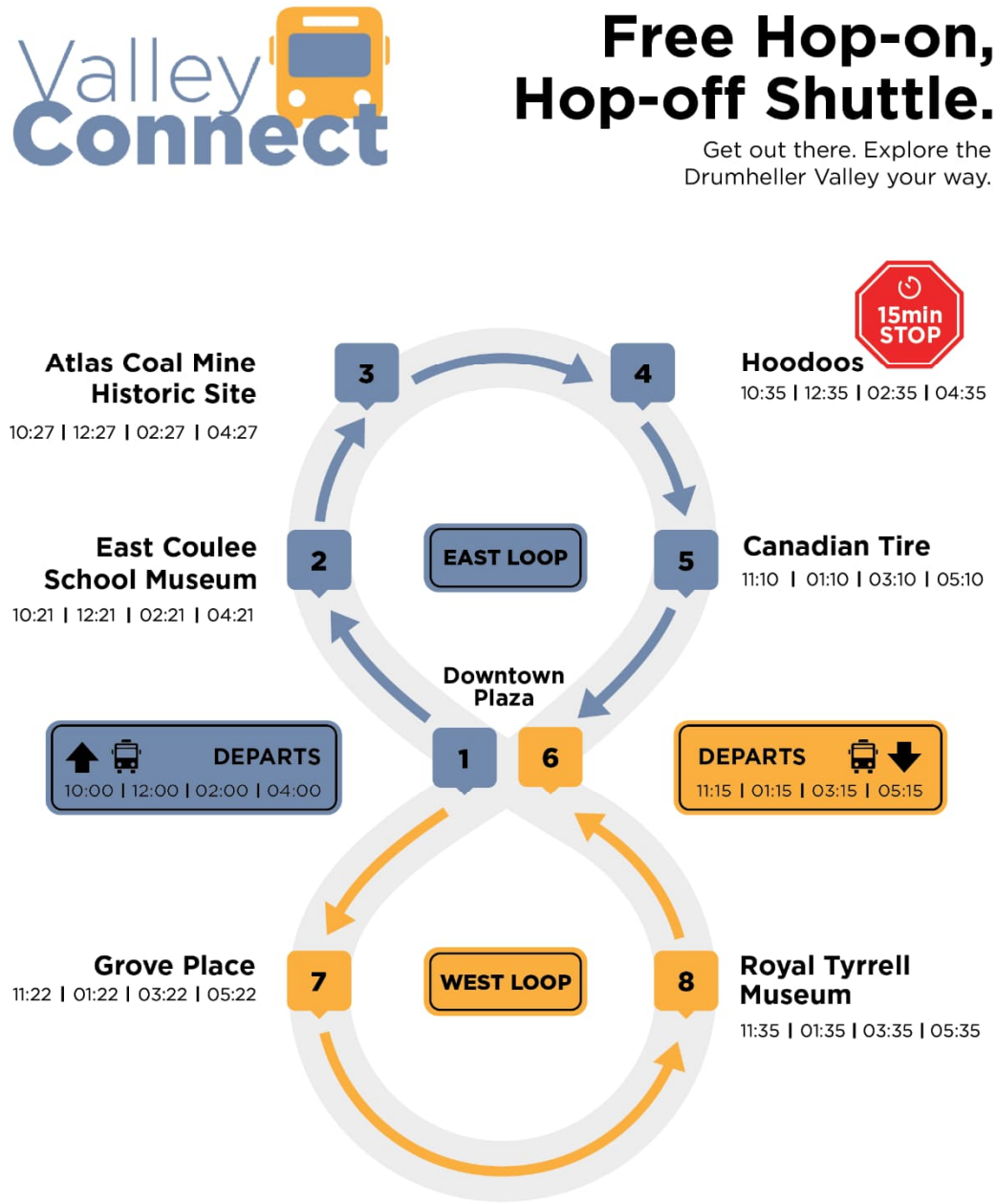
Based on stakeholder discussions, taxi service was described as irregular and as a result, the community can at times be without transportation services.

Valley Connect Shuttle Bus Pilot

Valley Connect is a summer shuttle bus pilot undertaken by Travel Drumheller. The free hop-on/hop-off service will run Friday and Saturday from June 26 to August 29, 2026. **Figure 3-11** shows the route and timetable. The service includes two alternating loops, anchored at the Downtown Plaza, to move people to key destinations and services. The East Loop provides access to East Coulee, the Atlas Coal Mine and Hoodoos. The West Loop provides access to the Royal Tyrrell Museum. The Canadian Tire and Grove Place stops provide access to accommodations, food service/grocery and other services. The Downtown Plaza stop also serves to connect people with a new intercity bus service to/from Calgary being trailed by FlixBus starting May 2026. The results of the pilot will be shared with the community in fall 2026.

Both the shuttle bus pilot and this Study aim to evaluate how public transportation can enhance mobility, economic development and support the needs of Drumheller residents and visitors.

Figure 3-11: Valley Connect Shuttle Bus Pilot Route



3.4 Round 1 Stakeholder and Community Engagement

As part the Transit Feasibility Study, input was collected from both key stakeholders and the wider community. Stakeholder engagement involved interviews with Town staff, service providers, and community organizations to understand priorities, challenges and opportunities related to transit. For the general public, a survey was conducted to gather information on travel behaviours, preferences and attitudes toward a potential transit system. Findings from interviews and survey results are outlined in this section.

3.4.1 Community Survey Results

The Community Transit Survey was conducted from late September through November. Surveys were made available both online and hardcopy to ensure broad accessibility. A total of 213 responses were received from the public.

Respondent Place of Residence

As shown in **Figure 3-12** a majority of respondents are permanent residents of Drumheller with a small amount of participation from residents from the surrounding area and seasonal Drumheller residents. This indicates the survey results primarily reflect perspectives of year-round residents.

Most respondents identified Downtown, Riverside and Bankview as their place of residence as shown in **Figure 3-13**. Cambria, Wayne and the Industrial Area/Hy Grade have the lowest amount of representation in terms of survey responses.

Figure 3-12: Status of Respondents Residency

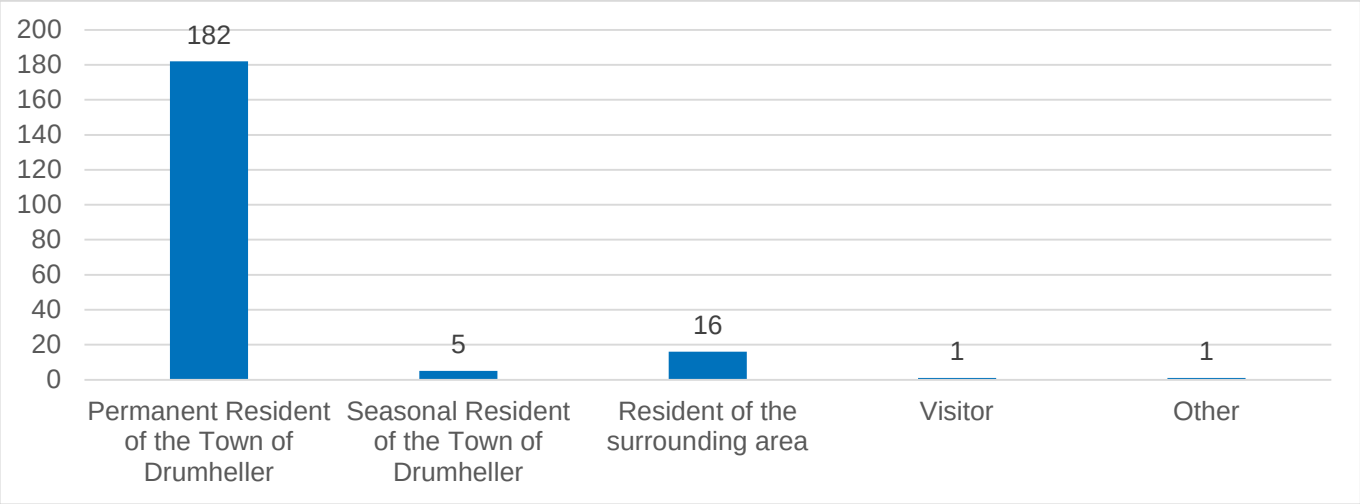
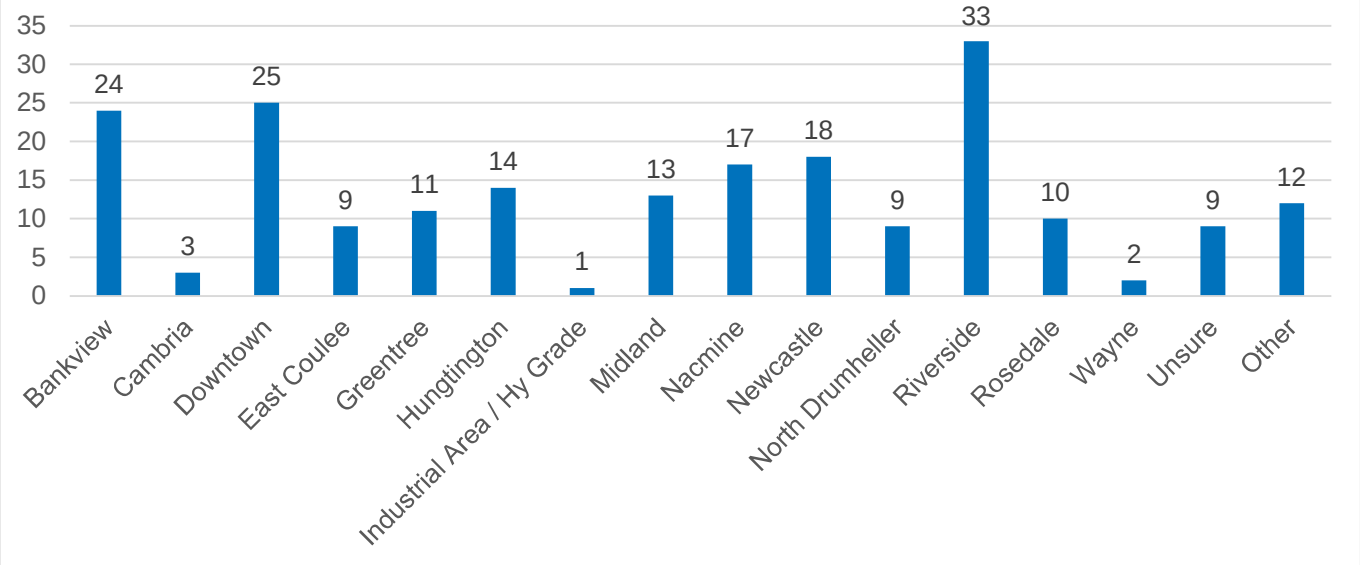


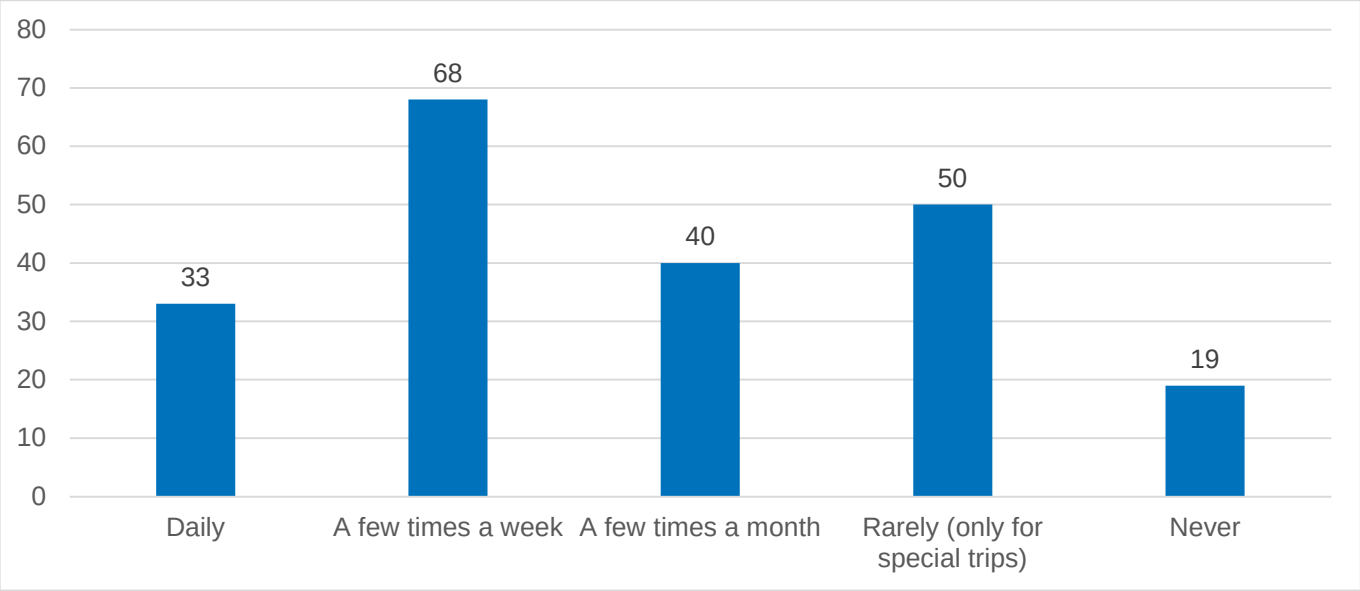
Figure 3-13: What Community Respondents Reside in Drumheller



Desire for Local Transit Service

If public transit were available in Drumheller, 48% of respondents indicated that they would use public transit regularly, either daily or a few times a week as shown in **Figure 3-14.**

Figure 3-14: How Often Respondents Would Use Public Transit



Where Transit Should Operate

Downtown, Midland, Riverside, Rosedale, Nacmine and Newcastle are the top five communities' respondents indicated they would like to access by transit as shown in **Figure 3-15.**

Survey respondents expressed a strong interest in accessing grocery stores, recreational facilities, and medical or health services by transit, among other destinations as shown in **Figure 3-16.** Overall, there is a clear desire to use transit for a wide range of activities.

Figure 3-15: Communities Respondents Would Like to Access by Transit

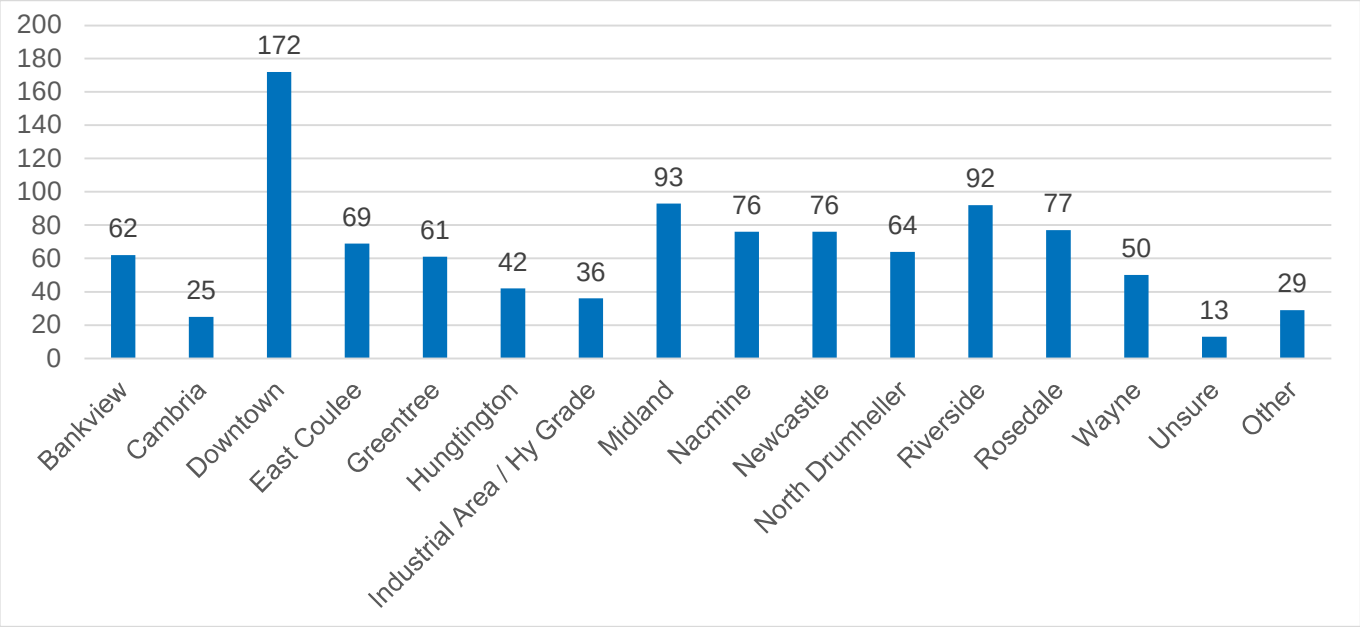
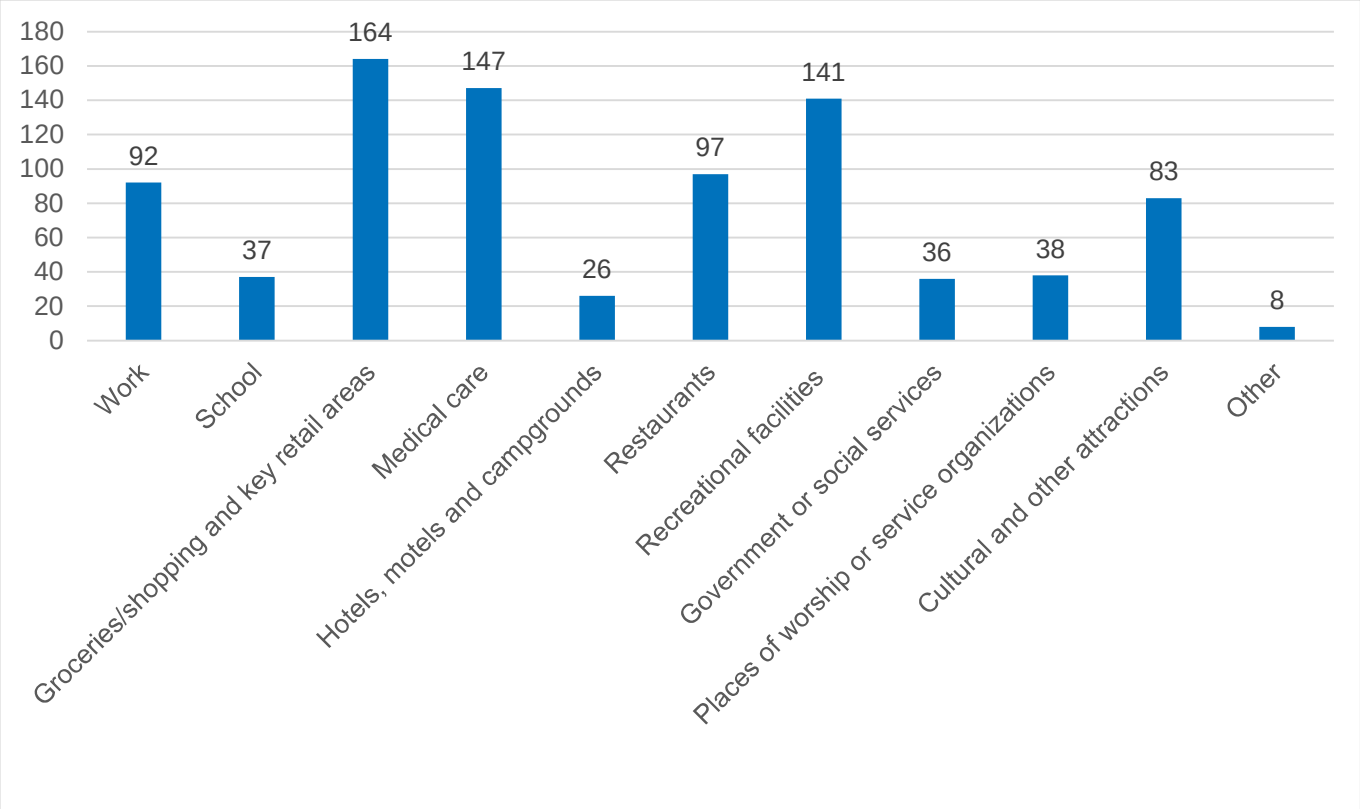


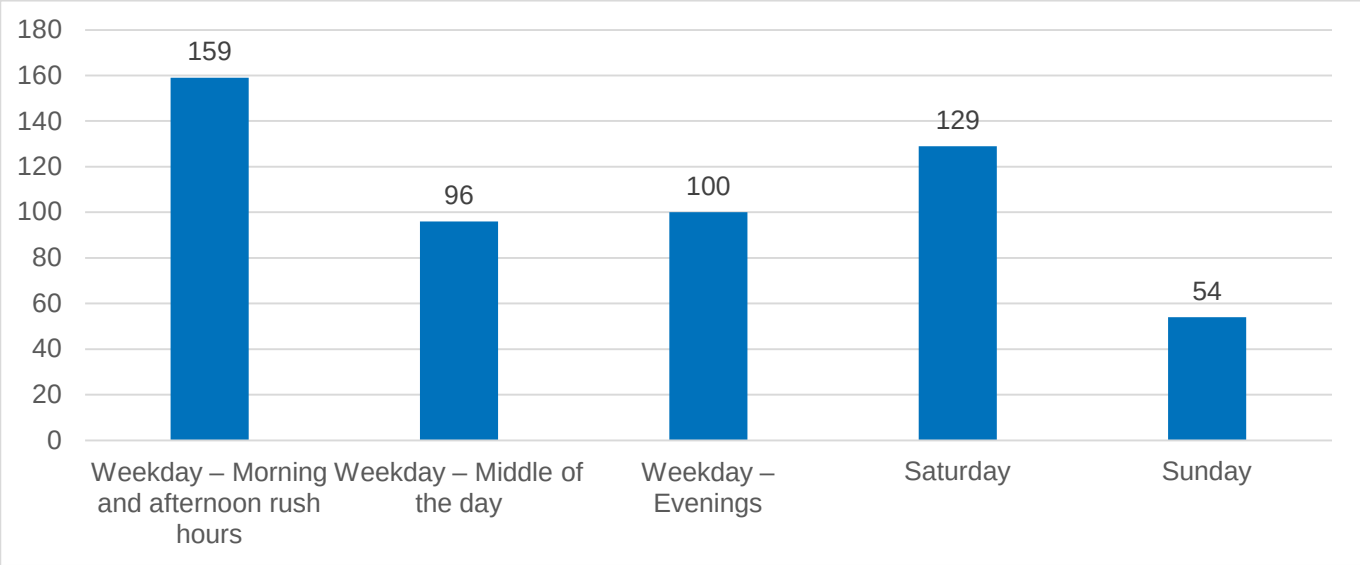
Figure 3-16: Desired Amenities to be Reached by Public Transit



Desired Periods of Operation

Survey respondents expressed interest in having transit available during various periods of the day with no clear consensus on preferred operating periods, as shown in **Figure 3-17.** However, weekday morning and afternoon rush hours received the highest number of votes overall.

Figure 3-17: Preference on When Public Transit Should Operate



System Design and Service Delivery Preferences

Respondents were asked to consider how the following factors might influence their decision to use public transit:

- **Comfort:** Availability of amenities, smooth connections to destinations, and an overall dignified travel experience.
- **Walking Distance to Bus Stops:** The time and effort required to reach a bus stop.
- **Reliability:** Consistent, predictable, on-time service delivery.
- **Fare levels:** The cost to passengers of using the transit system.
- **Connections:** Ability to travel between communities such as Downtown, Nacmine, Rosedale etc.
- **Coverage:** Access to a wide range of amenities within the community.
- **Frequency:** How often buses are scheduled to run.

Figure 3-18 illustrates the relative influence of each of these factors on transit use. While many elements are important to the community, reliability, connections between community and coverage are the dominant key drivers for transit usage.

As shown in **Figure 3-19** a majority of respondents would like to see a transit service delivery model that combines fixed routes, on-demand service and seasonal/visitor focused routes.

Figure 3-18: Factors that Influence the Use of Public Transit

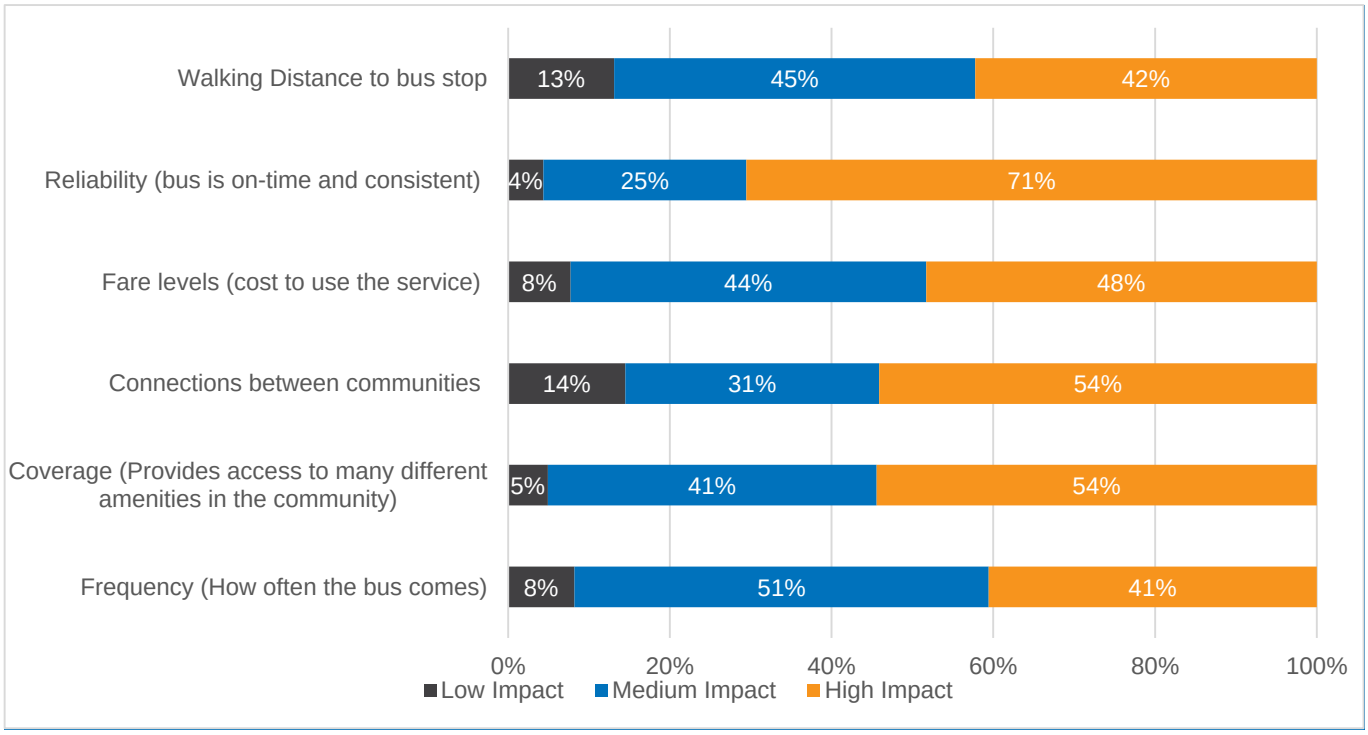
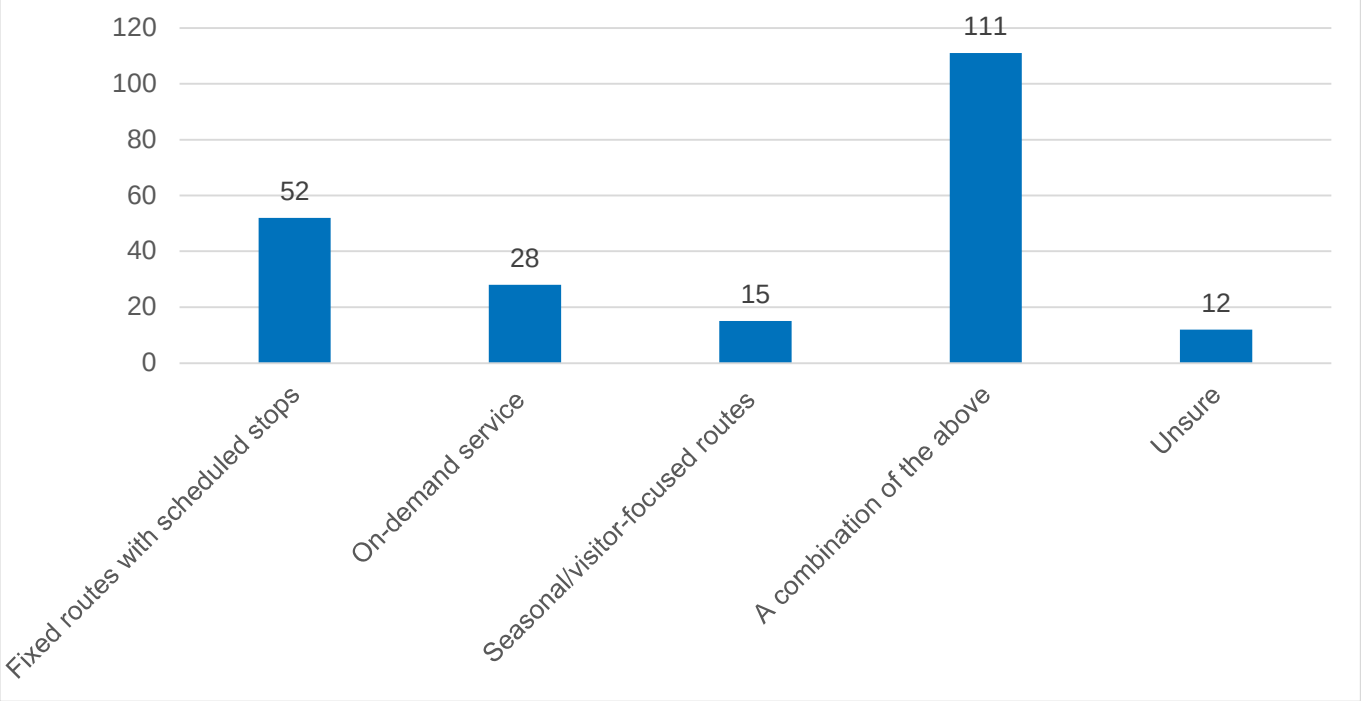


Figure 3-19: Preferred Transit Service Delivery Model



3.4.2 Stakeholder Interviews

Virtual stakeholder interviews were conducted over a defined period (November 18 – December 3, 2025) as part of the Study. In total 6 stakeholder interview sessions were conducted, and they included the following organizations:

- Brooks and County Immigration Services
- Drumheller and District Chamber of Commerce
- Drumheller and Region Transition Society
- Drumheller Health Centre
- Greentree Elementary School
- Royal Tyrrell Museum
- St. Anthony's School
- Town of Drumheller Staff

These interviews provided valuable insight on current transportation challenges, priorities and perspectives on the feasibility of introducing a transit system in Drumheller.

Key findings are provided below.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Transit Need and Travel Demand

Stakeholder engagement revealed strong consensus that Drumheller currently lacks a reliable, affordable transportation option for residents without access to private vehicles. Groups most affected include seniors, medical patients, people with disabilities, newcomers to Canada, low-income households, students, and residents of outlying communities such as East Coulee and Nacmine. Existing transportation options including, Valley Bus, taxis, private services, and informal community arrangements, are limited in capacity, costly, and inconsistent, resulting in barriers to healthcare access, employment, housing choice, and participation in community activities. Across interviews, stakeholders emphasized that transportation challenges are most acute during winter months and disproportionately affect vulnerable populations.

The most consistent and immediate demand identified through stakeholder input is for weekday, daytime travel, particularly for medical appointments, school-related trips, errands, and access to key destinations such as the hospital, downtown core, and community facilities. Stakeholders stressed that reliability, affordability, and accessibility are critical.

Preferred Transit Model and Service Characteristics

There was mixed support among interviewed stakeholders for a traditional fixed-route transit system. Though some stakeholders liked the reliability a fixed transit schedule could potentially bring, others thought fixed-route service was unrealistic for Drumheller's size and travel patterns. A number of stakeholders thought a demand-responsive transit model could serve a broader range of users and trip purposes. For this group, the demand-responsive approach was seen as better aligned with local travel demand and more flexible for serving many people's needs.

Many stakeholders expressed a preference for a service that combines on-demand booking with predictable service times and a defined set of stop locations or service zones. Wheelchair-accessible vehicles were identified as essential, as was a fare structure that remains affordable to vulnerable users, with commonly cited acceptable fares in the range of $5–8 per round trip. While app-based booking was considered viable for many residents, stakeholders emphasized the need for a phone-based booking option, particularly for seniors and those less comfortable with technology. Finally, stakeholders stressed that successful implementation will depend on a successful rollout grounded in trust, clear communication, and realistic expectations.

3.5 Review of Peer Communities and Best Practices

This section begins by outlining the range of transit service delivery models available for implementation, including conventional fixed route systems, on-demand transit, flex route, hybrid approaches and partnership-based solutions such as subsidized taxi programs. Following this overview, the section benchmarks Drumheller against similar size communities, highlighting best practices that inform the selection and design of transit options. The peer review provides context for understanding what has worked elsewhere and how those experiences can be adapted to the Drumheller's needs.

3.5.1 Transit Service Delivery Models

A variety of service delivery models are available to rural communities, each offering distinct operational characteristics and suitability depending on the local context. This section provides an overview of the primary models that can be considered for Drumheller

Conventional Fixed Route System

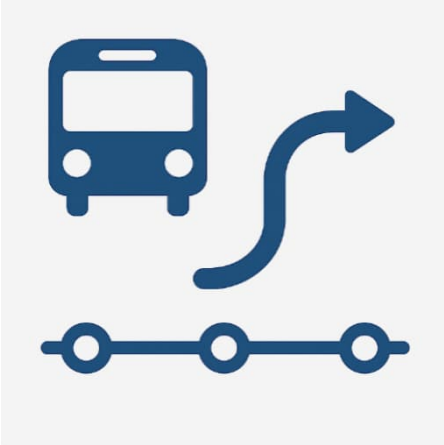
Conventional fixed route systems operate on established routes and schedules, with buses stopping at designated locations at set times. Fixed route transit is most effective in areas with concentrated populations and consistent travel demand between key destinations such as town centres, shopping areas and schools. This model offers predictable service and is easy for users to understand and plan around. However, in communities with low population density or widely dispersed settlements, fixed route transit can suffer from an inability to provide adequate coverage, resulting in inefficient operations. Services typically provide strong reliability, at the expense of coverage.

On-Demand Transit and On-Demand Microtransit

On-demand Transit allows riders to request trips as needed, typically through a smartphone app or call centre, with vehicles dispatched dynamically within a defined service area. Trips may be provided either curb-to-curb or between designated pick-up and drop-off locations, depending on the service design. This model provides higher coverage in rural and low-density communities, where fixed routes may not be viable. The On-demand model can match transit service supply with the actual demand of the community and provide access to residents who may live far away from main corridors. However, it poses challenges as it requires users to adapt to new booking technologies and variabilities in wait times. Services typically provide good coverage but poor reliability.

On-demand Microtransit builds on the flexibility of On-demand service by using smaller, shared vehicles such as standard minivans or shuttles. These vehicles operate without fixed routes or schedules, dynamically adjusting to rider requests within a defined service area. Microtransit connects residents to key destinations and offers more efficient routing and shorter wait times compared to conventional fixed route transit. While it improves accessibility in low density areas, it also requires careful coordination and technology adoption to ensure reliability and user satisfaction.

Flex Route Service



Flex route transit combines aspects of fixed route and demands responsive service. In this model, a bus operates along a defined route with scheduled timing points and termini at fixed stops, but it has the flexibility to deviate to pick up or drop off passengers closer to their origins or destinations typically upon advance request. Riders can board or alight at a flag or fixed stops along the main route and the bus will only leave the route if a deviation is requested. This service delivery model can improve accessibility and coverage for users beyond walking distance from main corridors while maintaining a basic level of scheduled service. However, operational complexity can increase as drivers must balance scheduled stops with deviations and careful management is required to avoid delays or missed connections. Public awareness and understanding of how to request deviations are also important for a successful implementation.

Hybrid Approach

Hybrid models combine conventional fixed route service during periods or areas of higher demand with on-demand or flexible service in lower demand contexts. This approach is well suited to smaller urban and rural settings to balance the predictability of schedule service with the flexibility of demand responsive options. This delivery model can optimize resource allocation, maintain essential connections during peak times and extend service to less populated areas. However, these systems can be more complex to operate and communicate to the public requiring careful scheduling, coordination and clear information for users to understand when and how each service is available.

Partnership Based Solutions

Partnership based models use existing transportation providers such as local taxi companies, volunteer driver programs, or ride sharing services often supported by municipal subsidies or coordination. This approach assists in meeting the needs of residents without access to private vehicles. These programs can be responsive to individual needs, especially in areas where demand is too low to support dedicated transit vehicles. However, service quality and availability depend on the capacity of local providers and municipalities may have less control over scheduling, pricing, and service standards compared to operating or coordinating their own transit fleet.

The key features, advantages and challenges of each model is summarized in **Table 3-2**.

Table 3-2: Summary of Transit Delivery Models

Service Delivery Model	Key Features	Advantages	Challenges
Fixed Route	Schedule, set route and stops	Predictable, reliable and easy to use	Inflexible, costly in low density areas with low ridership
On-demand	Flexible, rider-initiated trips within a service area	Broad coverage and efficient use of resources	Requires technology adoption, variable wait times and higher per trip costs. Low reliability.
Flex Route	Follows a set route and schedule but can deviate within a defined area upon request	Increase coverage for dispersed populations, maintains some schedule predictability	Operational complexity
Hybrid	Mix of fixed route and On-demand elements	Balanced, adaptable and can optimize resources	Complex to operate and communicate
Partnership Based	Uses taxis, volunteer drivers, or rideshare often with municipal subsidy	Cost effective for low demand, leverages existing providers, responsive to individual needs	Limited control over service quality, dependent on provider capacity and may have limited availability

3.5.2 Peer Community Review

For this study, various peer communities were reviewed based on their comparable size, rural context and experience with transit service implementation. Municipalities selected include the following:

- Hinton, AB
- Kenora, ON
- Wawa, ON
- Prince Edward County, ON
- Dawson Creek, BC
- Nelson, BC
- Fort Saskatchewan, AB
- Elliot Lake, ON
- Clearview, ON
- Cranbrook, BC
- Kitimat, BC
- Prince Rupert, BC

Table 3-3 highlights how these municipalities are delivering transit services. Communities like Kenora and Wawa operate microtransit or on-demand models using small fleets and limited-service hours. Other communities run fixed route systems with larger buses and broader schedule. These examples offer practical benchmarks for Drumheller as it explores service options tailored to its size and needs.

Table 3-3: Overview of Peer System Transit Services[1]

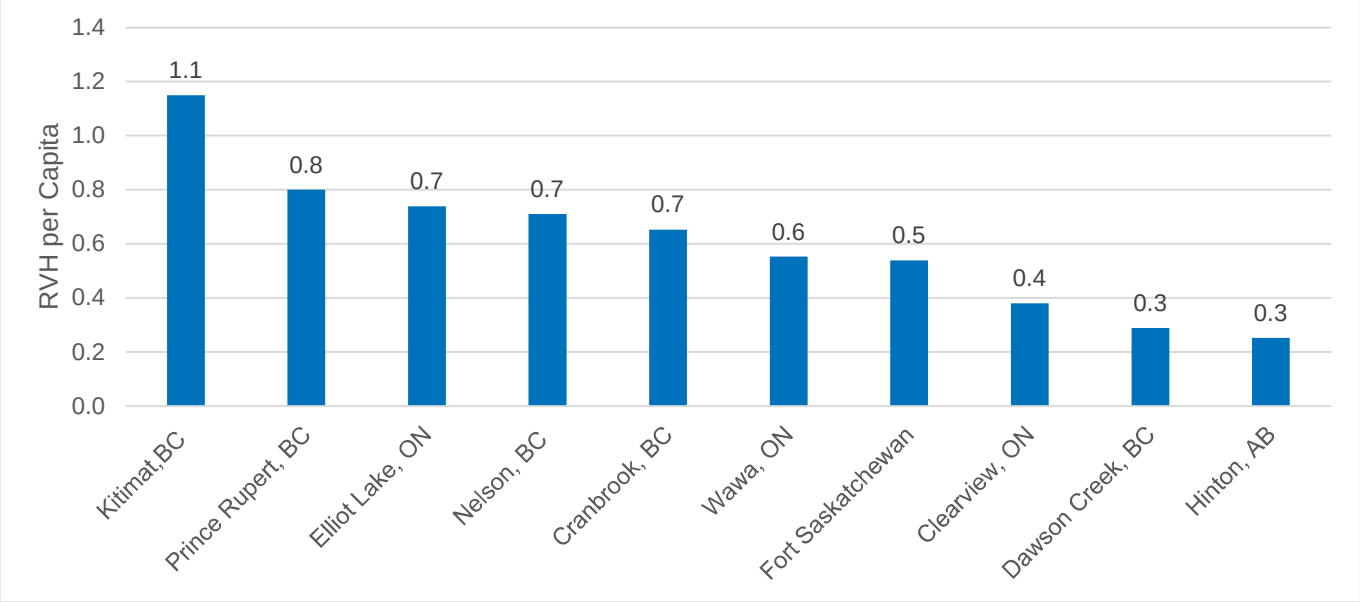
Community	Service Area Population	Service Area Size (km2)	Service Type	Service Availability	Time of Operation	Vehicle (# and Type)	Cost per Single Trip	Annual Ridership	Revenue / Cost Ratio (R/C Ratio)	Cost per Capita
Drumheller	**8,410**									
Hinton, AB	12,000	-	Conventional Fixed Route (1 route)	6 days (Monday – Saturday)	Daytime + Evening	3x big bus	$3.00	22,680	14%	$24.58
Fort Saskatchewan, AB	19,000	48.1	Conventional Fixed Route (3 route)	5 days (Monday – Friday)	Daytime	3x big buses	$3.25	86,400	18%	$51.45
Kenora, ON	14,900	N/A	On-demand Microtransit	5 days (Monday – Friday)	Daytime	Mixed light-duty vehicle fleet	$2.50	-	-	-
Elliot Lake, ON	11,400	16	Conventional Fixed Route (4 routes)	Everyday	Daytime	6x big buses 2x small buses	$2.75	100,808	29%	$35.00
Wawa, ON	2,700	3.5	On-demand	5 days (Monday – Friday)	Midday only	1x small bus	$5.00	1,399	7%	$16.36
Clearview, ON	4,500	10	Conventional Fixed Route (1 route)	Everyday	Daytime + Weekday Evening	1x big bus	$2.00	13,300	6%	$79.00
Prince Edward County, ON	7,000	50	Conventional Fixed Route (1 route)	5 days (Monday – Friday)	Daytime	1x big bus	Less than 5km: $3.50 5km-19km: $5.00 20km+: $10	5,026[2]	8%[3]	$19.85[4]
Cranbrook, BC	18,540	-	Conventional Fixed Route (7 route)	Everyday	Daytime	6x big bus	$2.25	195,102	15%	$37.42
Dawson Creek, BC	11,382	-	Conventional Fixed Route (2 route)	5 days (Monday – Friday)	Daytime	3x big bus	$2.25	72,548	12%	$25.97
Kitimat, BC	7,727	-	Conventional Fixed Route (5 route)	Everyday	Daytime + Evening	5x buses	Local: $2.00 Region Connector $4.00	159,097	10%	$85.52
Nelson, BC	16,459	-	Conventional Fixed Route (9 route)	6 days (Monday – Saturday)	Daytime + Evening	6x big bus	$2.25	339,402	22%	$36.15
Prince Rupert, BC	12,669	-	Conventional Fixed Route (8 route)	6 days (Monday – Saturday)	Daytime + Evening	5x big bus	Local: $2.00 Region Connector $3.00	188,643	21%	$34.36

1 Note: Service Area Population and Service Area Size statistics for Municipalities other than Drumheller were obtained from the 2023 CUTA Factbook and from VIA*
[2] Data reflect 2022 as 2023 data is unavailable.
[3] Data reflect 2022 as 2023 data is unavailable.
[4] Data reflect 2022 as 2023 data is unavailable.

Investment Range

The level of service investment varies across peer communities, as shown in **Figure 3-20**. Most systems fall within the 0.3 to 0.8 revenue vehicle hours (RVH) per capita range. Communities such as Hinton (0.3) and Dawson Creek (0.3) fall at the lower end, reflecting more limited service. Mid-range systems include Cranbrook (0.7), Nelson (0.7), Elliot Lake (0.7) and Prince Rupert (0.8). Kitimat (1.1) is the only peer system above 1.0 RVH per capita, indicating a higher level of investment compared to systems of similar scale. Overall, the peer review suggests that municipalities comparable to Drumheller generally provide approximately 0.5-0.8 RVH per capita. This benchmarking helps contextualize potential service levels for Drumheller and can support decision-making around an appropriate level of transit investment.

Figure 3-20: Peer Communities Revenue Vehicle Hours per Capita

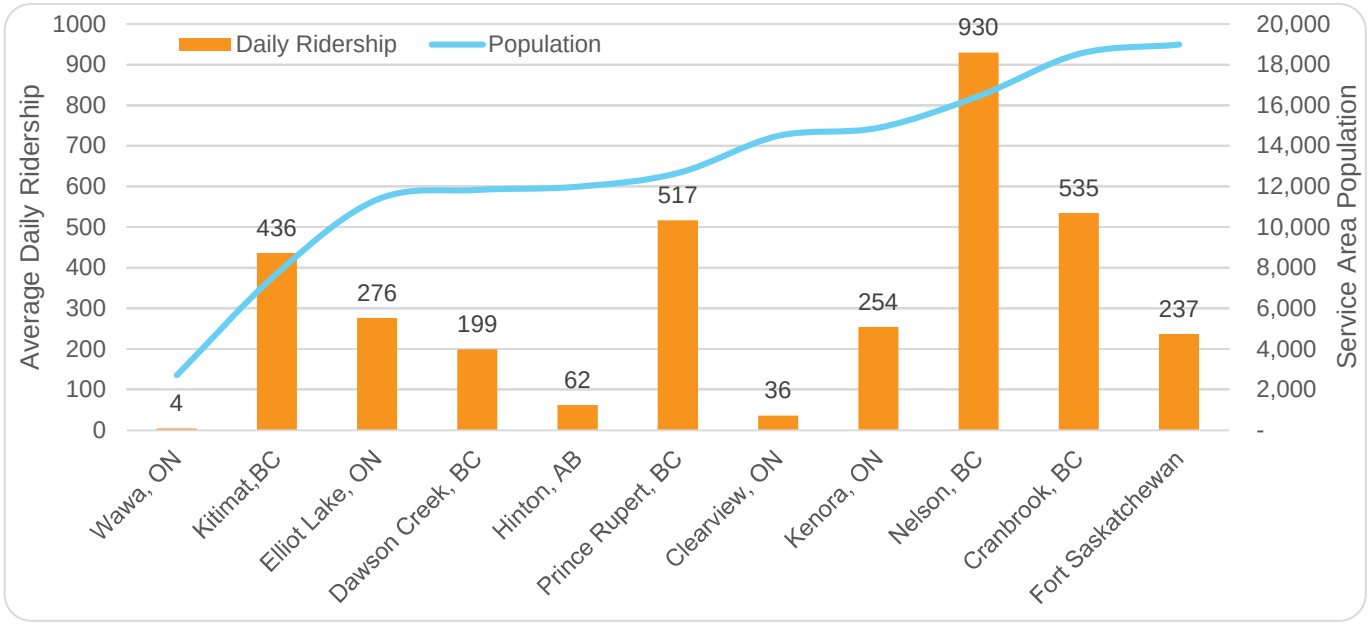


Source: CUTA Factbook, 2023

Ridership Range

Figure 3-21, presents the average daily ridership across peer communities. Nelson and Cranbrook record the highest ridership levels, followed by Prince Rupert and Kitimat. Communities with populations between 4,500 to 12,000 including Clearview, Prince Rupert, Hinton, Dawsons Creek, Elliot Lake and Kitimat experience a daily ridership range of 36 to 517 trips.

Figure 3-21: Peer Community Transit Systems Average Daily Ridership

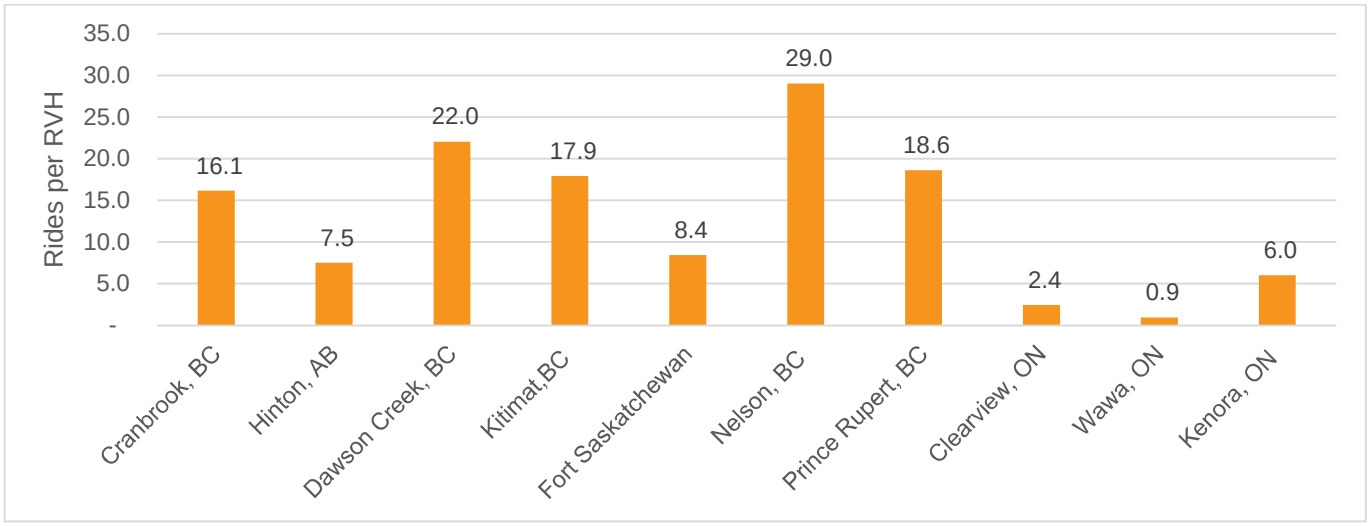


Source: CUTA Factbook 2023, VIA

Usage and Efficiency

Figure 3-22 which presents annual riders per service hour highlights system efficiency, which measures how efficiently transit services are used relative to resources invested. Nelson leads with 29 rides per service hour, a well utilized fleet. Dawson Creek and Prince Rupert follow with 22 and 18 rides respectively. Comparatively, Clearview and Wawa show the lowest efficiency, with 2.4 and 0.9 rides per hour. System efficiency is a key performance indicator for small transit systems, helping municipalities assess whether their service aligns with demand. Higher efficiency can support cost effectiveness and justify service expansion, while lower figures may indicate a need to adjust service hours, coverage or vehicle types to better match community needs.

Figure 3-22: Peer Community Transit Systems Annual Riders per Service Hour



Source: CUTA Factbook 2023, VIA

Functional Operations

Figure 3-23 presents the functional arrangements for managing transit systems, each reflecting a different level of local government involvement. At the highest level of municipal control, Clearview directly owns and operates its transit service, including responsibility for vehicle maintenance. A mid-tier model, seen in Elliot Lake, and Wawa, involves municipal ownership of vehicles while contracting out operations and maintenance to third parties. In Hinton, vehicle provision and maintenance are outsourced, but the service is operated by municipal transit drivers. At the lowest level of municipal involvement, Kenora and Prince Edward County fully outsource both vehicle provision and service operations. These arrangements demonstrate how communities tailor their transit governance based on capacity, resources and strategic priorities, factors that the Drumheller may consider when determining its approach.

Figure 3-23: Functional Transit Operation Arrangements

Functional Arrangement	Example Communities
Community **OWNS & MAINTAINS** rolling stock & **OPERATES** transit system	Clearview
Community **OWNS & MAINTAINS** rolling stock BUT contracts-out operations	Wawa, Elliot Lake
Community fully contracts-out vehicle requirements and maintenance through leases but **OPERATES** the service	Hinton
Community fully **CONTRACTS-OUT** operations, and vehicle requirements and maintenance through leases (can be full turn-key)	Prince Edward County, Kenora

3.6 Needs and Opportunities Summary

The assessment of existing transportation conditions, socio-economic characteristics, community input, and stakeholder perspectives reveals several clear mobility needs within Drumheller, as well as opportunities for the development of a public transit system.

Needs

- **Need to Expand Transportation Options Beyond Private Vehicles:** Municipal and tourism policy documents emphasize the importance of shifting Drumheller away from its strong dependence on private automobiles and toward a more balanced transportation network. This includes providing improved mobility options for youth, non-drivers, and residents who require alternatives to car travel.
- **Mobility for Residents Without Access to a Private Vehicle:** Stakeholder interviews consistently highlighted a lack of reliable, affordable transportation options for residents who do not drive or do not own a vehicle. This challenge disproportionately affects seniors, medical patients, people with disabilities, low-income households, newcomers, and students, as well as residents of outlying communities such as East Coulee and Nacmine.

- **Reliable Weekday and Daytime Access to Key Destinations:** The most immediate and consistent demand identified across community and stakeholder engagement relates to essential weekday trips. These include medical appointments, school-related travel, employment access, shopping, and trips to the hospital, downtown core, and community facilities. Reliability and consistency were identified as critical attributes needed for any future transit system.
- **Connections Between Communities:** Drumheller's linear geography and the dispersion of communities create transportation challenges. Survey results show a strong desire for access between communities.
- **Accessible and Affordable Service:** Stakeholders emphasized the need for wheelchair-accessible vehicles and an affordable fare structure. Ensuring affordability is particularly important for seniors, low-income households, and vulnerable populations. Clear operating protocols / ease-of-booking (if on-demand transit) is very important to maintaining accessibility for all.

Opportunities

- **Adoption of a Flexible Service Model focused primarily on connecting destinations within the core:** There is strong alignment between community needs and preferences, residential densities, the location of key destinations, and the suitability of a fixed route or demand-responsive service. With the majority of commutes under 30 minutes—and many under 15 minutes—Drumheller's travel patterns are well-suited to a community transit system if made convenient and accessible. A hybrid system could be explored to provide connectivity to communities along the valley, as warranted.
- **Integration with the Valley Connect Shuttle Bus Pilot Program:** Travel Drumheller's planned Valley Connect Shuttle Bus Pilot Program, scheduled to begin in summer 2026, presents an opportunity to explore service models, test demand, and expose the community to public transportation. Lessons learned from the pilot can inform long-term system planning for the municipality.
- **Strong Public Interest in Using Transit:** Nearly half of survey respondents indicated they would use a transit service regularly—either daily or multiple times per week—if available.
- **Alignment with Municipal and Tourism Priorities:** The Municipal Development Plan and Destination Development Plan both identify enhanced mobility, alternative transportation, and improved regional connectivity as priority goals. Public transit investment would directly support these policy directions and contribute to community development, tourism accessibility, accessibility, economic development, and overall livability.
- **Seasonal and Tourism-Based Service Opportunities:** Tourism in Drumheller is significant yet constrained by the lack of public transportation. Introducing seasonal or visitor-focused routes can improve visitor mobility, support businesses, and strengthen the local tourism economy while complementing resident-focused transit offerings. The viability of tourism-based services are being piloted through the Valley Connect Shuttle Bus Pilot Program.
- **Improving Equity and Community Inclusion:** Enhanced transportation options would address barriers to employment, healthcare, education, and social participation—especially for vulnerable groups.

4. Development and Evaluation of Public Transportation Service Options

This section outlines key considerations that inform the development of public transportation options and potential service structures. Building on these principles, it introduces the specific service options developed for Drumheller. Each option is then assessed using a Multiple Account Evaluation (MAE) framework to determine its overall suitability and potential effectiveness for Drumheller. The developed options were presented to the community during the Open House. Feedback gathered from participants was used to refine the options and inform the final recommendations.

4.1 Transit Vision for Drumheller

Public transit in Drumheller will support local mobility by providing feasible, affordable and community supported service that connects residents and visitors to jobs, services, amenities and key tourism destinations.

Transit will be designed to:

- **Support local mobility** by enabling convenient travel within Drumheller by connecting residents and visitors to key destinations such as employment areas, services, amenities and major tourism attractions.
- **Provide equitable access** offering a transit option to people of different ages and abilities.
- **Be affordable and feasible** by balancing service coverage and quality with financial sustainability, providing an affordable system that is manageable by the Town in the long term.
- **Adapt to seasonal demand** by acknowledging Drumheller's tourism economy and seasonal travel needs and by allowing services to be adjusted in response to variations in population, employment and visitor activity.
- **Be simple and reliable** by delivering a service that is easy to understand, and dependable, supporting confidence in transit use for both residents and visitors.

4.2 Option Development

4.2.1 Key Considerations

When planning public transportation for a community, several key considerations influence service design and implementation. These include the type of service model, operating periods, vehicle selection and approach to operations and contracting. Each of these factors affect cost, accessibility and overall service quality. For example, service orientation determines whether routes are fixed or flexible, while

operating periods influence convenience for riders. Vehicle type impacts the capacity, and the operations and contracting can affect efficiency, accountability and long-term sustainability. **Table 4-1** below summarizes these considerations and provides examples of options available for each.

Table 4-1: Summary of Considerations for Public Transportation Service Provision

Service Orientation	Periods of Operation	Vehicle Type	Operations and Contracting
• Fixed route • Flex route • On-demand • Hybrid	• Weekday peak periods only • Weekday midday only • Weekday all day • Weekday evenings • Weekends	• 40 ft “big” bus • Cutaway bus / shuttle • Larger passenger van • Minivan	• Municipal owned and operated • Municipal owned with operations contracted • Vehicles and operations contracted • Full turn-key service

4.2.2 Potential Servicing Options

Based on the principles outlined in **Section 4.2.1**, a variety of service combinations are possible. For the purposes of this study, a set of practical options was developed for Drumheller and evaluated to determine the viability of each. The options developed are summarized in **Table 4-2** and discussed in further detail in this section. For analysis purposes, weekday all-day operations are assumed for all options, except Option 5. Periods of operation are refined in subsequent sections.

Table 4-2: Overview of Potential Public Transportation Options for the Drumheller

	Public Transportation Option Packages				
	Option 1: Fixed Route – Central Drumheller	**Option 2: Fixed Route – Central Drumheller + Intercommunity**	**Option 3: Fixed Route – Central Drumheller + Limited Intercommunity**	**4: On-demand Transit**	**5: Community Partnership**
Service Structure	Fixed route connecting Royal Tyrrell and central Drumheller (Riverside – Newcastle)	Central fixed route + intercommunity route (Nacmine to East Coulee)	Central fixed route + limited intercommunity route (Nacmine to East Coulee)	On-demand rides available within Central Drumheller	Partner with community service orgs to leverage existing vehicles in community for a set number of days a week
Potential Service Change Structure	Switch to a flex route service	Switch to a flex route service, make intercommunity routes seasonal	Switch to a flex route service, make limited intercommunity routes seasonal	-	-
Frequency	Bus every 60-90 mins	Bus every 60-90 mins	Central Drumheller bus every 60-90 mins, Further community: limited service	Based on availability	Based on availability
Period of Operation	← Potential for weekday mid-day, weekday all day, or weekday + weekend service →				Periodic / Based on Availability

4.2.3 Option 1 Fixed Route – Central Drumheller

Option 1 represents a conventional fixed-route transit system proposed to operate only in central Drumheller. As shown in **Figure 4-1** this option would consist of **two fixed bus routes** providing service between the Royal Tyrrell Museum and central Drumheller, including the Riverside and Newcastle areas. The routes are intended to operate on a preset schedule, with trips provided approximately every 60 to 90 minutes, offering predictable service throughout the day. A central bus hub is assumed at the Badlands Community Facility allowing for coordinated transfers and convenient access to key community destinations.

Figure 4-1: Option 1 Fixed Route – Central Drumheller

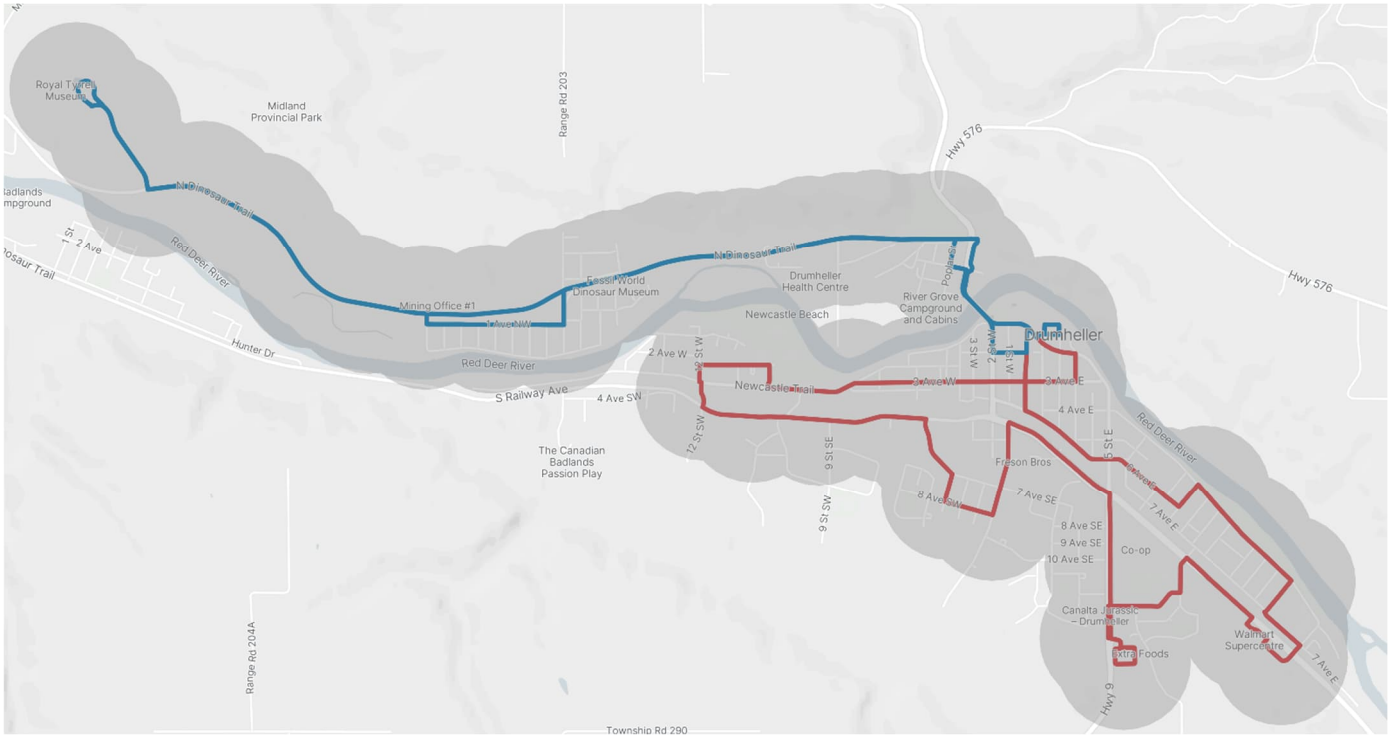


Table 4-3 summarizes the key characteristics for Option 1.

Table 4-3: Summary of Option 1 Characteristics

Vehicle Requirements	Service Frequency	Key Locations Served
1x active vehicle 1x spare	60-90 minutes on a preset schedule	• Drumheller Health Centre • Badlands Community Facility • Royal Tyrrell Museum • Visitor Information Centre • Memorial Arena

Vehicle Requirements	Service Frequency	Key Locations Served
		• Aquaplex • Newcastle Rec Area and Beach • Grocery stores: Walmart, No Frills, Freson Bros • Downtown shopping

4.2.4 Option 2 Fixed Route – Central Drumheller + Intercommunity Service

Option 2 expands service coverage through the provision of **three fixed bus routes** operating between Royal Tyrrell Museum and East Coulee as shown in **Figure 4-2.** The option provides a broader geographic coverage by extending service beyond central Drumheller to include intercommunity connections, to Nacmine, Rosedale and East Coulee improving access to destinations along the valley. The service is proposed as fixed route model, however there is potential to adjust the service approach overtime. Service changes in the future could include transitioning to a flex-route service and making intercommunity routes seasonal to better align service levels with demand, operational needs and seasonal travel patterns.

Figure 4-2: Option 2 Fixed Route – Central Drumheller + Intercommunity Service

Table 4-4 summarizes the key characteristics for Option 2.

Table 4-4: Summary of Option 2 Characteristics

Vehicle Requirements	Service Frequency	Key Locations Served
2x active vehicle 1x spare	60-90 minutes on a preset schedule	• Drumheller Health Centre • Badlands Community Facility • Royal Tyrrell Museum • Visitor Information Centre • Memorial Arena • Aquaplex • Newcastle Rec Area and Beach • Grocery stores: Walmart, No Frills, Freson Bros • Downtown shopping • Nacmine, Rosedale and East Coulee

4.2.5 Option 3 Fixed Route – Central Drumheller + Limited Intercommunity Service

Option 3 focuses on central Drumheller while also providing limited intercommunity service through **three fixed routes** operating between Royal Tyrrell Museum and East Coulee as shown in **Figure 4-3**. Under this option two core routes (Route 1 and Route 2) within central Drumheller operate more consistently throughout the day, while the intercommunity route (Route 3) identified as “limited” operates during specific periods day. This approach prioritizes service where demand is expected to be higher while maintaining a basic level of connectivity to surrounding communities. The service is proposed as a fixed-route model, with potential future adjustments including a transition to a flex-route service and the option to make limited intercommunity routes seasonal to better align service levels with demand and operational considerations.

Figure 4-3: Option 3 Fixed Route – Central Drumheller + Limited Intercommunity Service

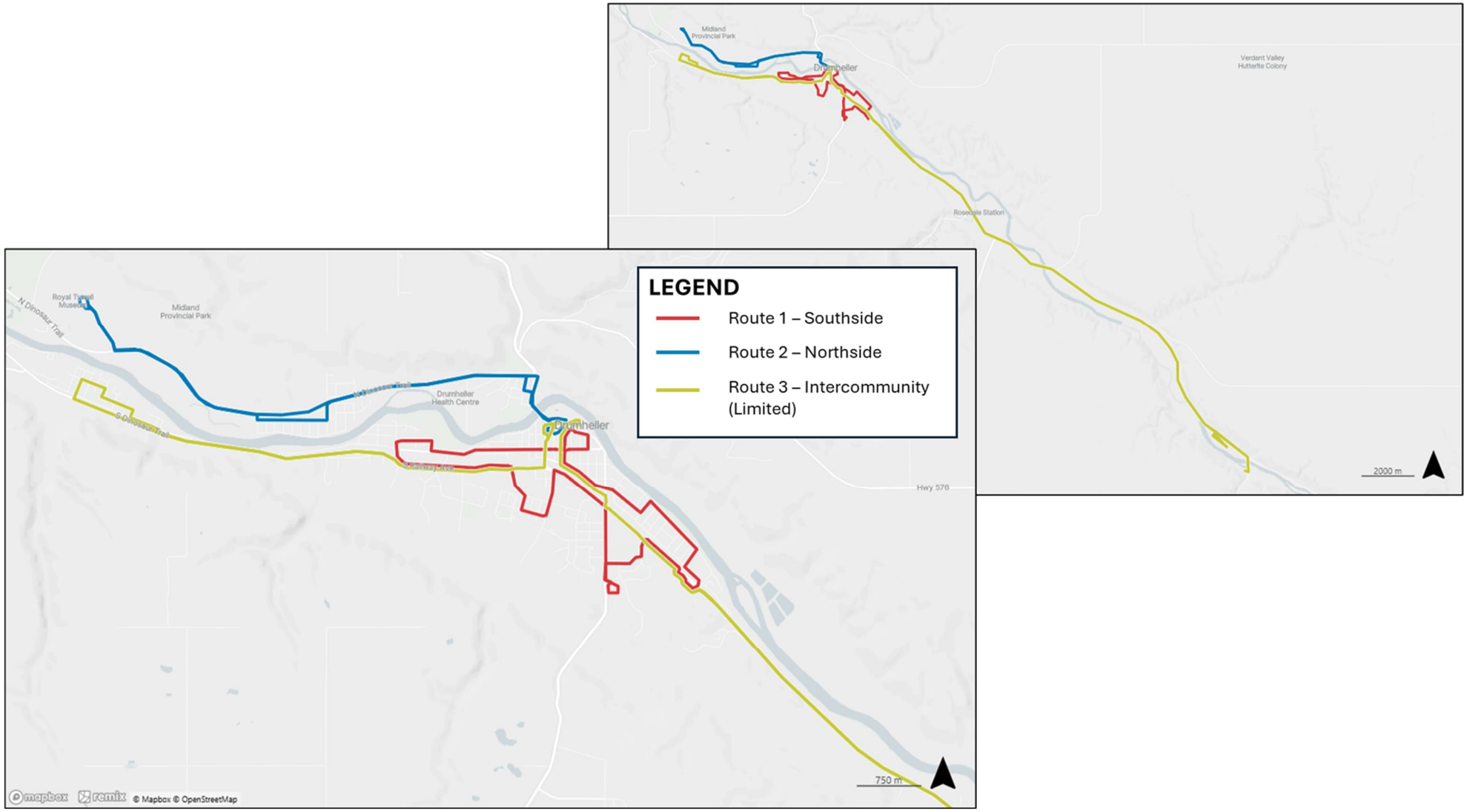


Table 4-5 summarizes the key characteristics for Option 3.

Table 4-5: Summary of Option 3 Characteristics

Vehicle Requirements	Service Frequency	Key Locations Served
2x active vehicle 1x spare		• Drumheller Health Centre • Badlands Community Facility • Royal Tyrrell Museum • Visitor Information Centre • Memorial Arena • Aquaplex • Newcastle Rec Area and Beach • Grocery stores: Walmart, No Frills, Freson Bros • Downtown shopping • Nacmine, Rosedale and East Coulee

4.2.6 Option 4 On-demand Transit

Option 4, is **a curb-to-curb on-demand transit service** operating within a defined service area as shown in **Figure 4-4**. Trips are requested through a mobile application, with a supporting call centre available for customers who are unable to use the app. Depending on service scale and operating requirements, trip scheduling may be supported by dedicated on-demand transit software or coordinated dispatch by staff through a call centre. The service will use flexible trip scheduling and automated trip pairing to reduce wait times between service requests and pick-ups. Service is available to all areas within the designated service boundary, with routing and travel times varying based on daily demand. This option is designed to provide a flexible and responsive service, adapting to changing travel needs throughout the day.

Figure 4-4: Option 4 - On-demand Service Area

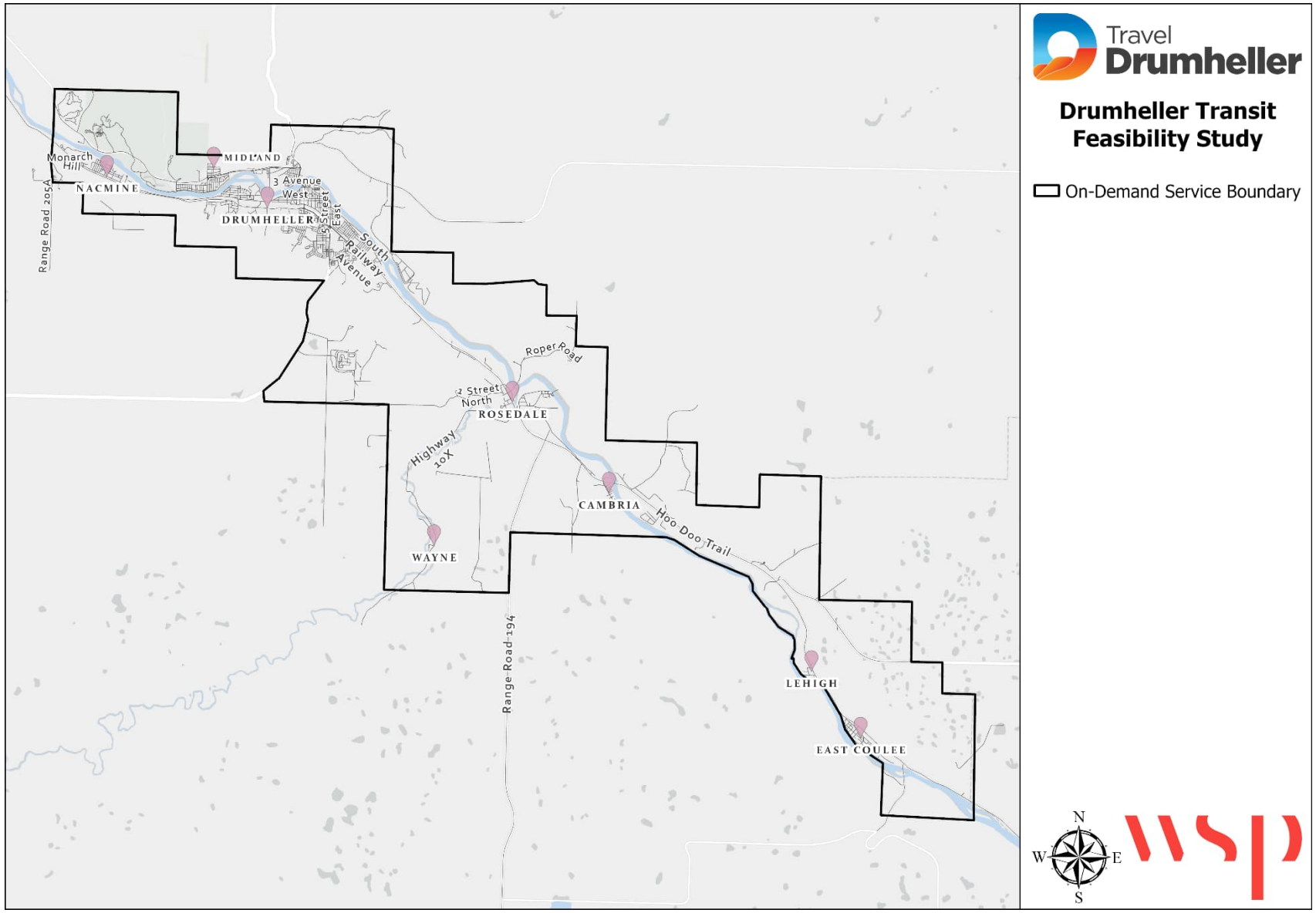


Table 4-6 summarizes the key characteristics for Option 4.

Table 4-6: Summary of Option 4 Characteristics

Vehicle Requirements	Service Frequency	Key Locations Served
2x active vehicle 1x spare	On-demand within zone on a first come first serve basis. May require prebooking.	All locations within the on-demand zone (municipal boundary of the Town of Drumheller)

4.2.7 Option 5: Community Partnership

Option 5 is the **community partnership model**, where the Municipality partners with a local service organization that has access to a vehicle. The Municipality would cover the cost of a driver, provide insurance and manage related considerations. The partner organization would supply a vehicle that is currently underutilized.

As this model relies on a shared resource, service delivery would likely be limited to a few days per week rather than daily weekday service, as the vehicle owner likely needs the vehicle for other purposes. Typically, only one vehicle would be available with no backup. If and when the vehicle requires maintenance, the service would need to be temporarily suspended.

Table 4-7 summarizes the key characteristics for option 5.

Table 4-7: Summary of Option 5 Characteristics

Vehicle Requirements	Service Frequency	Key Locations Served
1x active vehicle	Varies depending on partner organization's availability.	To be determined.

4.3 Option Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation of the five public transportation options outlined has been completed. This assessment aims to provide an in-depth understanding of each option across core elements:

- Service Performance and Accessibility
- Operational Performance
- Implementation and Scalability
- Cost and Financial Sustainability

To ensure a balanced analysis, a Multiple Account Evaluation (MAE) framework was applied to all options.

Service Performance and Accessibility

This category covers how well the service meets user needs and ensures ease of access. In the MAE we looked at several factors, including:

- Coverage – How much area the service reaches
- Reliability – Consistency and punctuality
- Travel flexibility – Ability to support different trip patterns
- Trip directness – Routes take the most efficient path between origins and destinations, minimizing transfers and deviations

Frequency, hours of operation and accessibility were also reviewed as part of the MAE as these factors will affect convenience for all users. Periods of operation are assumed to be consistent across Options 1 through 4 with services operating on weekdays between 7 am and 6 pm. Option 5 (Community Partnership) assumes more limited periods of operation: 2 days per week for 8 hours only.

Operational Performance

This category examines how effectively each option can function in practice. In the MAE, we considered estimated annual ridership, which reflects the total number of passengers the system is expected to carry over a year, and vehicles required, which indicates the fleet size needed to deliver the service. Together, these measures provide insight into the resources necessary for operations and help put the potential ridership into context.

Implementation and Scalability

In the MAE, we examined how easily each option can be introduced and expanded overtime. Key considerations included the ease of implementation, which reflects how straightforward it is to launch the service; operating complexity, which indicates the effort required to manage daily operations; and scalability, which measures the ability to grow and adapt the system to meet future demand without major challenges.

Cost and Financial Sustainability

Financial considerations play an important role in evaluating each option. For the MAE, we reviewed capital cost, representing the initial investment required to establish the service, and estimated annual operating cost, which accounts for ongoing expenses to keep the system running. Together, these figures help show whether an option is financially feasible to implement and sustainable over time.

The MAE, which accounts for all categories and criteria as described above, is outlined in **Table 4-8.**

Table 4-8: Multiple Account Evaluation for Options Presented at the Open House

○ - Very Poor ◔ - Poor ◑ - Moderate ◕ - Good ● – Very good		**Option 1: Fixed Route – Central Drumheller**	**Option 2: Fixed Route – Central Drumheller + Intercommunity**	**Option 3: Fixed Route – Central Drumheller + Limited Intercommunity**	**Option 4: On-demand Transit**	**Option 5: Community Partnership**
Service Performance & Reliability	**Coverage**	◑	●	◕	●	To be determined
	Reliability	●	●	●	◔	○
	Travel Flexibility	◔	◔	◔	●	○
	Trip Directness	◕	◕	◕	◔	To be determined
	Frequency	60-90 minutes	60-90 minutes	Central Drumheller service 60-90 minutes, intercommunity service limited to 2 trips per day	On-demand	As available
	Periods of Operation	7 am – 6 pm, M-F	7 am – 6 pm, M-F	7 am – 6 pm, M-F	7 am – 6 pm, M-F	2 days only (8 am to 4 pm)
	Accessibility	●	●	●	●	◔
	Walking Distance to Stop	◕	◕	◕	●	◕
Operational Performance	**Estimated Annual Ridership**	8,300 to 15,400	14,400 to 27,500	9,800 to 18,400	8,300 to 15,400	800 to 2,500
	Vehicles Required	1 active 1 spare	2 active 1 spare	2 active 1 spare	1 active 1 spare	1 active
Implementation & Scalability	**Ease of Implementation**	◕	◕	◕	◕	●
	Operating Complexity	●	●	◑	◕	◔
	Scalability	●	●	●	●	○
Cost & Financial Sustainability	**Capital Cost ($ to $$$$$)**	$$$	$$$$	$$$$	$$$	$
	Estimated Annual Operating Cost	$330 - $360k (Weekday All-Day)	$710 - $750k (Weekday All-Day)	$430 - $470k (Weekday All-Day)	$330 - $360k (Weekday All-Day)	$50 – 100k (1 – 2 days per week)

The scalability of the options were reviewed in detail. Some options offer greater flexibility for scaling up or down, while other have limited to no scalability. **Table 4-9** summarizes the scalability of each option, including the estimated operating cost impacts.

Table 4-9: Summary of the Scalability for Each Option

	Option 1: Fixed Route – Central Drumheller	*Option 2: Fixed Route – Central Drumheller + Intercommunity	Option 3: Fixed Route – Central Drumheller + Limited Intercommunity	Option 4: On-demand Transit	Option 5: Community Partnership
Service Period	**Service Hours (Annual Operating Cost $)**				
1 – 2 Days per Week (8 hours of service)	400 - 800 ($50-100k)	X	780 – 1,560 ($90 – 180k)	400 - 800 ($50-100k)	400 - 800 ($50-100k)
Weekday AM and PM Peaks Only	1,640 ($200k)	X	2,500 ($300k)	X	X
Weekday Midday Only	1,640 ($200k)	X	2,500 ($300k)	1,640 ($200k)	X
Weekday All-Day	2,900 ($350k)	6,000 ($730k)	3,800 ($450k)	2,900 ($350k)	X
Weekday All-Day + Weekend	4,200 ($500k)	8,800 ($1,050k)	5,500 ($660k)	4,200 ($500k)	X

**Assumes 2 intercommunity trips per day regardless of scenario.*

As shown in the table, Option 1 and Option 3 offer the greatest scalability. Once vehicles are acquired, service frequency can be adjusted based on available operating resources. Option 4 (on-demand) also allows flexibility, but it is less effective for AM and PM peak-only service because short operating windows are not well-suited for travel across a municipality. Option 2 can only operate either all day on weekdays or all day on weekdays plus weekends, as sufficient time is needed for the system to switch between fixed-route and on-demand service. Finally, Option 5 (Community Partnership) is assumed to involve a single vehicle operating during a limited period. As such, this option does not provide an opportunity to scale-up.

4.4 Round 2 Stakeholder and Community Engagement

The second round of stakeholder and public engagement included a in-person Open House, where over 50 community members attended. The session focused on presenting existing conditions, findings from the Community Transit Survey conducted during the first round of engagement and introducing the public transportation options that had been developed. Attendees were invited to provide feedback on these options.

4.4.1 Open House Findings

Feedback and interest on the five public transportation options presented at the Open House is summarized in **Table 4-10** with a comprehensive "What We Heard" report provided in **Appendix A**.

Table 4-10: Summary of Feedback Received on Options Developed

Option	Comments and Feedback
Option 1 – Fixed Route Central Drumheller	• Support for the focused service area as it improves reliability and keeps operating costs low by requiring only one vehicle. • Support for a flex route model. • Concerns that it does not serve East Coulee, Nacmine or Rosedale, and does not provide connections to Calgary. • Need to ensure that stops provide good access to riders.
Option 2: Fixed Route Central Drumheller + Intercommunity	• Support for the geographic coverage across the valley with fixed stops serving key destinations such as East Coulee Museum and Atlas. • Concerns over higher costs associated with the green route relative to expected ridership. • Concerns over limited service to Atlas outside the summer season and gaps serving attractions in Wayne.
Option 3: Fixed Route Central Drumheller + Limited Intercommunity	• Support for access to East Coulee combined with reliable service in the central core, offering broader coverage without significantly increasing costs. • Support for limited, of-peak extensions to Atlas, adjusting service frequency to East Coulee beyond peak hours and addressing transportation barriers for youth activities. • Concerns over limited access to medical appointments at different times of day and insufficient transit options for youth travelling to East Coulee during the summer.
Option 4: On-demand	• Support around on-demand service filling gaps during evening and weekends and serve a broader range of users. • Concerns about reliability during peak periods, uncertainty around wait times when demand is high and questions about whether the service would be competitive with driving in terms of cost and convenience. • Concerns around using third party apps, impacts to existing services (Bubba T's) and questions around multiple people needing the service at once.

5. Recommendations

This chapter presents the recommendations for the implementation of public transportation in Drumheller. These recommendations are based on the option development, evaluation and feedback gathered through stakeholder and community engagement as presented in **Section 4**. The goal is to identify the most practical service model for the context, considering community needs, operational feasibility and financial sustainability. The recommendations are intended to provide a clear direction for the community to consider initiating public transit services and outline considerations for future expansion as demand grows.

5.1 Recommended Transit Option

Following a detailed evaluation of service options and feedback from the public engagement process, Option 3, which provides service to central Drumheller and intercommunity connections was modified to better reflect community needs. The original Option 3 included limited intercommunity service consisting of two trips per day operating year-round. The recommended transit option builds on this approach by maintaining fixed route (Route 1 and Route 2) service in central Drumheller, while revising the intercommunity service (Route 3) to operate seasonally (July and August) and throughout the day.

The Badlands Community Facility is proposed as the central transit hub for the network, serving as the primary connection point from which all routes originate and connect. As the focal point of the system, the hub would facilitate transfers between routes, support coordinated scheduling, and provide a consistent and recognizable location for riders to access transit services. Its central location and existing role as a key community destination make it well suited to anchor the network, supporting connectivity and ease of use.

The recommended transit solution includes three routes operating between the Royal Tyrrell Museum and East Coulee, as shown in **Figure 5-1.** Core routes (Route 1 and Route 2) within central Drumheller are proposed to operate year-round, supporting local travel needs and improving service reliability within the primary service area. The intercommunity route (Route 3) is identified as “seasonal” service and is proposed to operate on a seasonal basis during July and August only.

Route 1 – Southside would operate entirely within central Drumheller, providing access to key destinations including downtown shopping areas, and major grocery stores such as Walmart, No Frills and Freson Bros. **Route 2 –** Northside connects the Royal Tyrrell Museum in the west along North Dinosaur Trail to central Drumheller, with a connection to the Drumheller Health Centre. Service on both routes would operate at 90-minute frequencies and would be interlined, meaning the same bus operates across both routes so passengers can remain on board without needing to transfer.

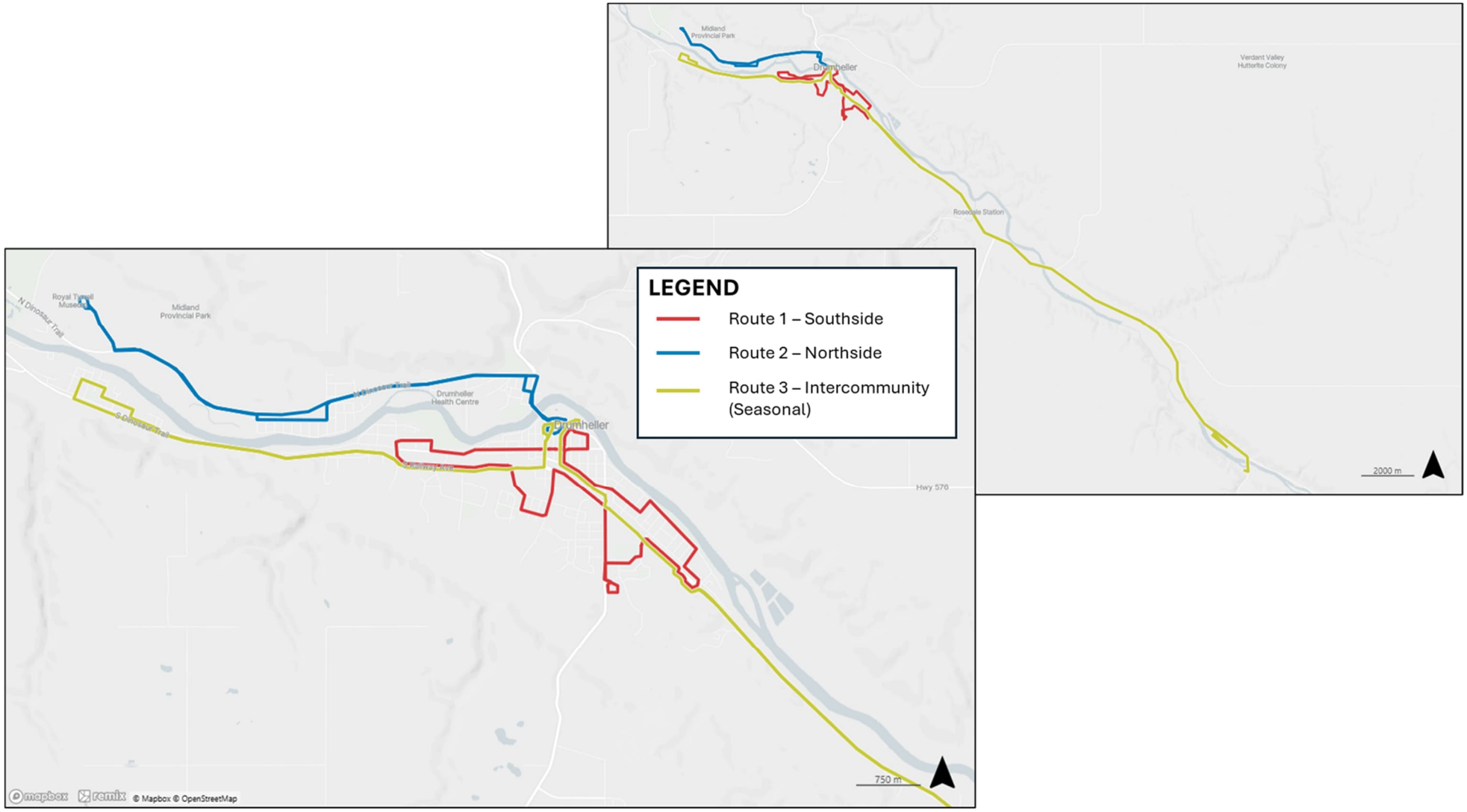
Route 3 – Intercommunity is proposed as a seasonal service operating at 90-minute frequencies during the summer months to support access to seasonal employment opportunities. This route connects East Coulee and the Atlas Coal Mine to central Drumheller, terminating at the Badlands Community Facility. Additionally, the route will extend west connecting to Nacmine as part of seasonal servicing operations. Seasonal servicing is intended to provide service that reflects Drumheller’s travel, particularly the increased demand associated with tourism and seasonal employment. Limiting this service to the

summer period allows transit to respond to demonstrated need while managing operating costs during lower-demand periods. This approach directs resources to where and when they are most effective, balancing community access with financial sustainability.

The proposed service would operate as a fixed route system, providing users with clear, predictable service. Fixed route transit is also operationally less complex than on-demand or pre-booked services, which require customers to request trips in advance through smartphone application or a call-in system. In addition, fixed route service offers strong potential for scalability. As ridership patterns evolve, service levels can be adjusted over time, allowing routes or frequencies to be scaled up or down in response to demand and funding availability.

This approach also reflects the importance of aligning different service types with their most effective roles. Specialized, demand-responsive services such as Valley Bus play a critical role in supporting residents with higher mobility needs. At the same time, broader community travel demand—such as trips for employment, shopping, and recreation—can be more effectively supported through fixed-route services that provide consistent, predictable connections across the community. Together, these complementary approaches can help create a more balanced and efficient overall transportation system.

Figure 5-1: Overview of Option 3 - Recommended Public Transportation Option



Frequency

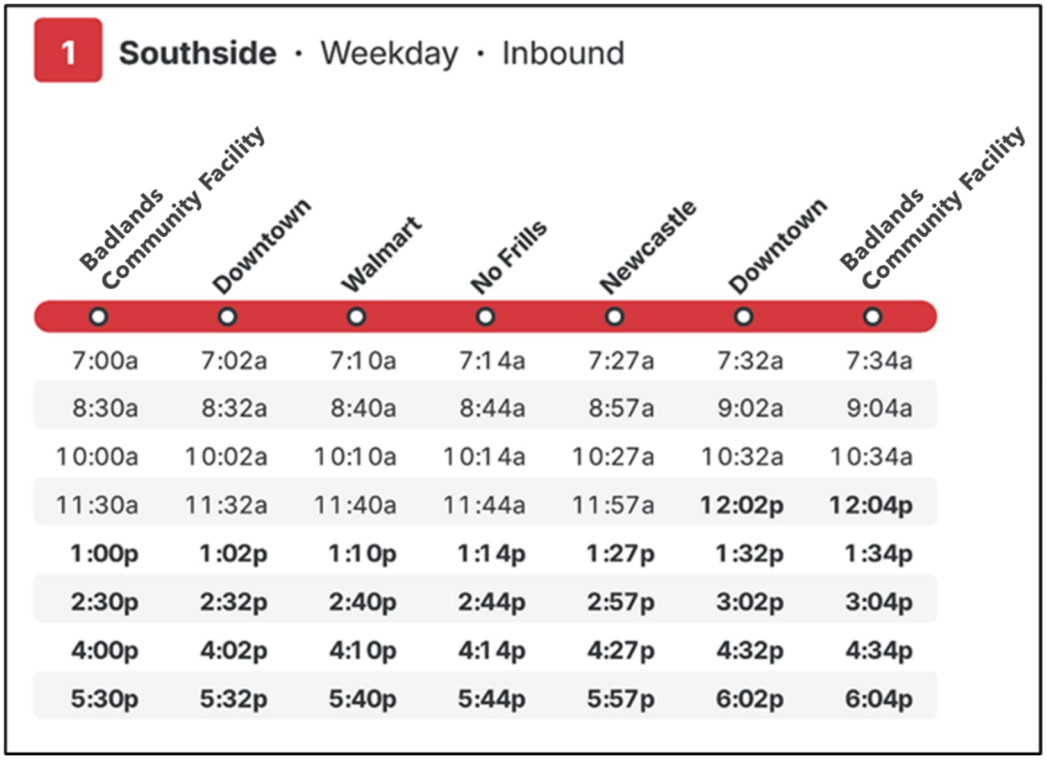
Bus frequency (how often bus trips occur) is a function of operating characteristics (route distance, average operating speed, available vehicles), available funding, and ridership. All services will be provided at 90-minute frequency, with Routes 1 and 2 being directly interlined, meaning the same bus operates across both routes so passengers can remain onboard without needing to transfer to another bus. Route 3 will be operated seasonally in July and August only.

Periods of Operation

The Community Transit Survey indicates demand for service across a range of potential service periods. To address this range in demand for travel, it is recommended that service be **operated on weekdays between 7:00 am and 6:00 pm**. Weekday evening and weekend service can be evaluated in future phases and would not require any additional vehicles. The recommended periods of operation correspond to the primary stated intentions of survey respondents including access to shopping/errands recreational amenities, medical appointments, work and visiting family or friends. Periods of operation align with service provided in peer municipalities including Fort Saskatchewan, AB, Elliot Lake, ON, Kenora, ON, and Dawson Creek, BC.

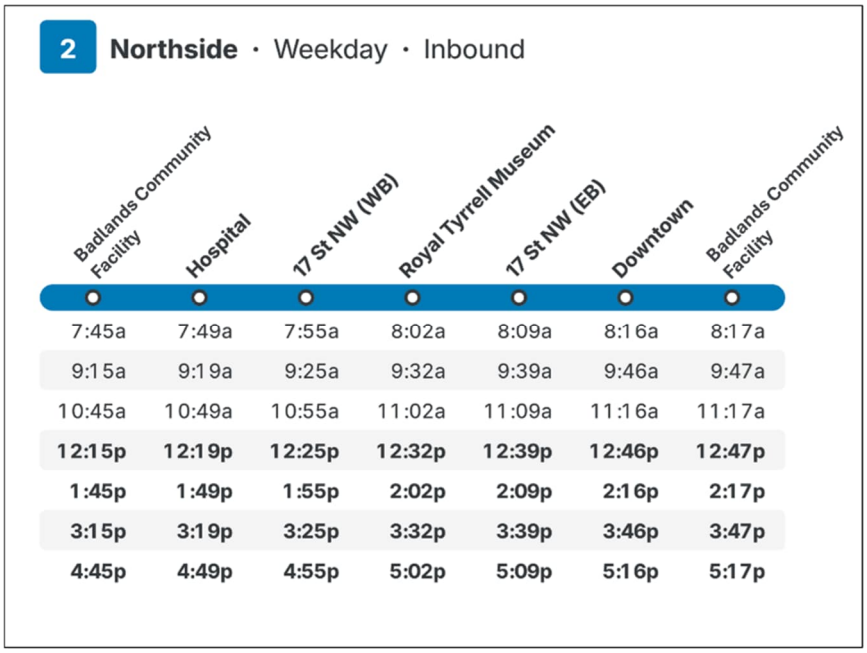
A draft schedule based on the above characteristics has been prepared for all routes shown in **Figure 5-2** through **Figure 5-3.**

Figure 5-2: Route 1 Service Schedule



7:00a	7:02a	7:10a	7:14a	7:27a	7:32a	7:34a
8:30a	8:32a	8:40a	8:44a	8:57a	9:02a	9:04a
10:00a	10:02a	10:10a	10:14a	10:27a	10:32a	10:34a
11:30a	11:32a	11:40a	11:44a	11:57a	12:02p	12:04p
1:00p	1:02p	1:10p	1:14p	1:27p	1:32p	1:34p
2:30p	2:32p	2:40p	2:44p	2:57p	3:02p	3:04p
4:00p	4:02p	4:10p	4:14p	4:27p	4:32p	4:34p
5:30p	5:32p	5:40p	5:44p	5:57p	6:02p	6:04p

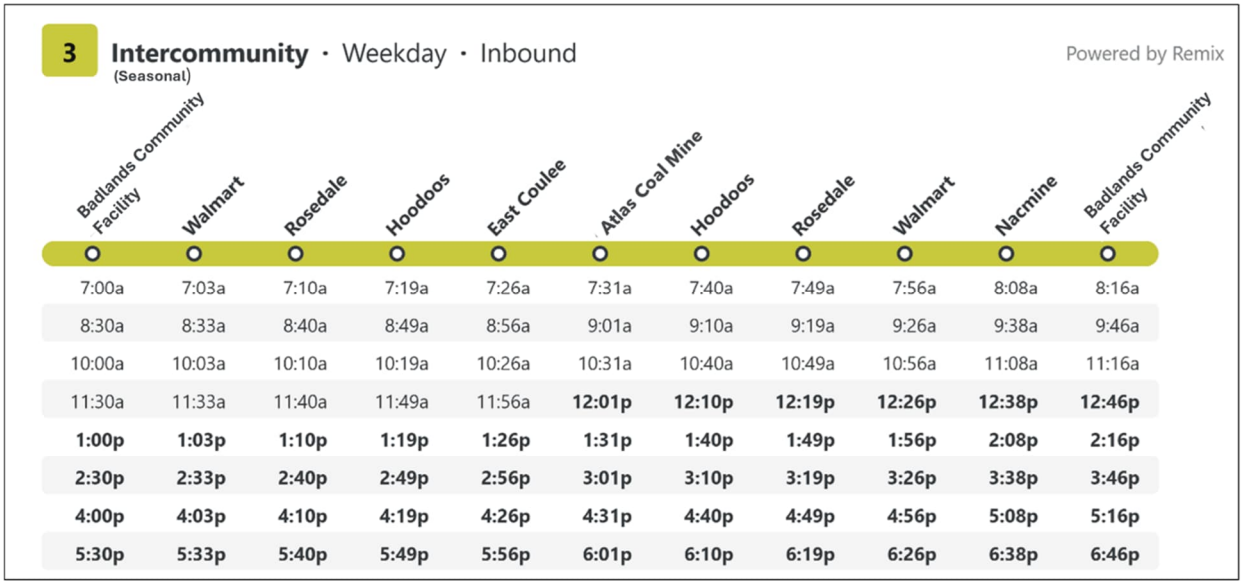
Figure 5-3: Route 2 Service Schedule



2 Northside · Weekday · Inbound

Badlands Community Facility	Hospital	17 St NW (WB)	Royal Tyrrell Museum	17 St NW (EB)	Downtown	Badlands Community Facility
7:45a	7:49a	7:55a	8:02a	8:09a	8:16a	8:17a
9:15a	9:19a	9:25a	9:32a	9:39a	9:46a	9:47a
10:45a	10:49a	10:55a	11:02a	11:09a	11:16a	11:17a
12:15p	12:19p	12:25p	12:32p	12:39p	12:46p	12:47p
1:45p	1:49p	1:55p	2:02p	2:09p	2:16p	2:17p
3:15p	3:19p	3:25p	3:32p	3:39p	3:46p	3:47p
4:45p	4:49p	4:55p	5:02p	5:09p	5:16p	5:17p

Figure 5-4: Route 3 Service Schedule (July and August only)



3 Intercommunity · Weekday · Inbound
(Seasonal)

Powered by Remix

Badlands Community Facility	Walmart	Rosedale	Hoodoos	East Coulee	Atlas Coal Mine	Hoodoos	Rosedale	Walmart	Nacmine	Badlands Community Facility
7:00a	7:03a	7:10a	7:19a	7:26a	7:31a	7:40a	7:49a	7:56a	8:08a	8:16a
8:30a	8:33a	8:40a	8:49a	8:56a	9:01a	9:10a	9:19a	9:26a	9:38a	9:46a
10:00a	10:03a	10:10a	10:19a	10:26a	10:31a	10:40a	10:49a	10:56a	11:08a	11:16a
11:30a	11:33a	11:40a	11:49a	11:56a	12:01p	12:10p	12:19p	12:26p	12:38p	12:46p
1:00p	1:03p	1:10p	1:19p	1:26p	1:31p	1:40p	1:49p	1:56p	2:08p	2:16p
2:30p	2:33p	2:40p	2:49p	2:56p	3:01p	3:10p	3:19p	3:26p	3:38p	3:46p
4:00p	4:03p	4:10p	4:19p	4:26p	4:31p	4:40p	4:49p	4:56p	5:08p	5:16p
5:30p	5:33p	5:40p	5:49p	5:56p	6:01p	6:10p	6:19p	6:26p	6:38p	6:46p

In all, eight Route 1 trips and seven Route 2 trips are provided each weekday throughout the year, requiring approximately 11.5 vehicle service hours each weekday, or approximately 2,900 vehicle service hours annually.

Eight Route 3 trips are provided each weekday during July and August, requiring approximately 12.5 vehicle service hours each weekday, or approximately 540 vehicle service hours annually (reflecting July and August only).

5.2 Ridership Projections

Annual ridership projections are estimated based on hourly utilization averages from peer community systems. Projections for Drumheller are provided in **Table 5-1** and represent stable state conditions. Between 57 and 109 rides are anticipated each weekday during summer months when Route 3 is in operation, resulting in an annual ridership projection of between approximately 9,300 and 17,400. Stable ridership will take time to build as potential clientele become familiar with the new transit offering and adjust their travel behaviours accordingly, which may take a period of up to 1 to 2 years.

Table 5-1: Drumheller Ridership Projections

	Low	High
Average Local Route (Shuttle) Rides per Service Hour	3.0 (2.0)	5.5 (4.0)
Route 1 & 2 Rides per Weekday	33	61
Route 3 Rides per Weekday	24	48
Aggregate Rides per Weekday	57	109
Annual Ridership Projection *(Assumes Route 3 Summer Service Only)*	9,300	17,400

5.3 Infrastructure Requirements

Two active vehicles (+1 spare vehicle) are required to provide the service as described. A spare vehicle is essential to the reliable functioning of any transit system. All vehicles require periodic maintenance and servicing and can occasionally break down (or need to be transported to a larger community to address a major repair).

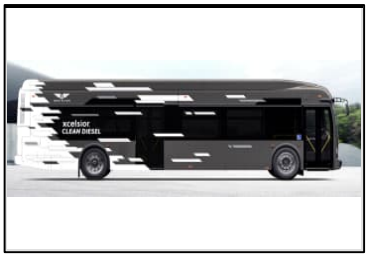
Vehicle Type

There are three basic types of design that can be selected for a public transit bus. Each is listed and described below. Although a life-cycle costing analysis specific to the proposed service was not part of this project, we provide some general observations to compare cost and performance of each bus type. Access to funding opportunities may inform vehicle selection.

Highway Coach

A highway coach is designed mostly for charters and inter-city travel. Seating is typically high quality, individual seats and loading is normally done only through a front door. These buses have compartments for luggage and may be equipped with a washroom. They are often not designed to be accessible. Highway coaches are designed for longer inter-city trips and not well suited to the constant boarding and alighting characteristics of urban transit routes**.**

Urban Transit Bus



An urban transit bus is purpose-built for operating in urban areas. The structure of the vehicle is extremely sound and buses can often achieve one million kilometres during their service life. Most urban transit buses today are built with a low-floor design. The bus is able to “kneel” as it stops at the curb and deploy a boarding ramp, if needed, for accessible access. These vehicles are available in standard lengths of 35 feet, 40 feet, and 60 feet (accordion-style). A 35-foot bus will seat about 32 passengers and can handle standing loads in addition to that.

Minibus

A minibus starts with a standard truck chassis and is typically referred to as a “cutaway” or “shuttle bus”. The seating and shell of the bus is then built onto the truck chassis. There are a number of configurations and lengths to which these buses are designed. Some minibuses have low-floor accessible access, while some have a wheelchair lift at the rear of the vehicle. The seating capacity is typically 16-20, fewer when wheelchairs are being accommodated. A minibus is not designed for standing loads and provides a lower quality ride (noise, space, passenger manoeuvrability) than an urban transit bus or a highway coach.

Assuming a quarter of all daily rides on Routes 1 and 2 take place on a single trip at the high total ridership projection of 61 rides per day, a vehicle must be able to accommodate – at minimum – 16 passengers at any given time. While 16 passengers are within the high-end of capacity expectations for a minibus, the anticipated seasonality of usage in Drumheller may result in greater variations in demand throughout the year.

As a result, one 35-foot cutaway (+ one spare) is recommended to serve local routes. Diesel or Natural Gas vehicles of this type retail for $600-800,000. Two vehicles are required.

A minibus is recommended to serve Route 3 (intercommunity) as ridership estimates fall significantly below threshold capacities (12 passengers are anticipated, assuming a quarter of all daily rides on Route 3 take place on a single trip). Including relevant customization to support full accessibility, diesel or gasoline vehicles of this type retails for $70 – $100,000. Two vehicles are required.

In addition to passenger capacity and comfort, a key benefit of the urban transit bus is that it will have more than double the service life of a minibus.

While the increased seating capacity and the extended service life of the urban transit bus justify the significant investment, we recognize that the high up-front cost can be an impediment to a quick-start or pilot implementation of the service. An alternative would be to purchase new or used minibuses. A 26-foot minibus would provide capacity for 16 – 20 passengers (fewer if wheelchairs are included). While this capacity may be adequate initially, it may be exceeded as the service matures. Ensuring that the capacity of the vehicles is not exceeded is critical to the success of the service, as riders left waiting at the stop as a full bus passes by is a major deterrent to continued use of the service.

Supporting Infrastructure

Supporting infrastructure may include bus stops, bus stop amenities, parallel or connecting sidewalks or alternate active transportation facilities, and lighting. Recommended supporting infrastructure includes:

Upgrades to infrastructure at Badlands Community Facility (terminal) to provide the following amenities:

- Bus shelter
- Bench
- Bus stop identification poll

In addition to the terminal, enhanced stop amenities (bus shelter, bench) are recommended at:

- Downtown Drumheller
- Walmart
- No Frills
- Royal Tyrrell Museum
- Drumheller Health Centre (Hospital)

Bus stop identification polls will be required at every Route 1 and 2 bus stop. Bus stop landing pads will be required where sidewalks (or sufficient sidewalk width) is not available. Stops along intercommunity highways are assumed to function on a flag-stop basis.

5.4 Staffing

The system as described would require 2 operators at 0.75 FTE and 1 administrator responsible for marketing, issue/complaint resolution, and coordination at 0.5 FTE. An additional 2 operators at 0.75 FTE would be required in July and August to operate Route 3. According to Provincial legislation, a Class 2 license is required to operate at public transit bus, while a Class 4 license is required to operate a small bus (11 to 24 passengers).

5.5 Service Delivery

It is recommended that Drumheller coordinate transit service and enter into negotiations with a third-party contractor to operate and manage transit services. The third-party contractor would be responsible

for staffing, ongoing vehicle maintenance, and management of daily operations including fare collection, monitoring cleanliness and state-of-good-repair of vehicles in operation, as well as responding to issues to support drivers and customers. While the municipality would not be required to operate or maintain fleet vehicles under this model, it is advised that the Municipality assign an employee as a primary point of contact with the contractor to streamline communications and management. This delivery method leverages contractor knowledge and expertise and minimizes Municipal responsibilities for staffing and maintenance.

To leverage available capital grants, it is recommended that the Town of Drumheller own the vehicles, thereby lowering ongoing contractor fees. As an alternative, transit could be implemented as a pilot project, with consideration given to contracting vehicle provision to a third-party operator to reduce upfront cost and risk to the Town.

Provision of supporting infrastructure such as benches and shelters would remain the responsibility of the Town.

5.6 Phasing Considerations

A fixed-route system can be scaled up or down depending on demand and available resources. To ensure the service is responsive to community needs, a monitoring review should be conducted approximately one year after implementation. The review should include the following:

- A ridership analysis to assess usage and system performance.
- A community and rider survey to gather feedback from riders.
- Adjustments to routing and service hours based on findings to improve convenience and efficiency.

Future phasing could include the addition of weekday evening, Saturday, or Sunday service, which would not require additional fleet. Improving trip frequencies to a trip every 45 – 60 minutes would require either (1) route shortening or (2) additional fleet and concurrent service hours (two buses in operation on Routes 1 and 2 at the same time).

6. Financial Considerations

6.1 Fare Structure

Adult base fare is recommended at $3.00 per ride for local services, which is generally in line with fares in Airdrie, Bow Valley, Leduc, Fort Saskatchewan, and Red Deer. An additional base fee of $2.00 is recommended for seasonal intercity services. Most peer transit systems offer discounts for seniors and/or youth, representing 60-80% of base far cost. Additionally, discounted multi-trip tickets or monthly pass offerings are offered to encourage frequent usage. Drumheller is encouraged to explore these fare discount options when determining its pricing structure.

6.2 Capital and Operating Costs

6.2.1 Capital Costs

Estimated capital costs are included in **Table 6-1**. Capital costs include vehicle acquisition ($1,485,000) and supporting infrastructure ($83,000), which combined is $1,568,000.

Table 6-1: Estimated Capital Costs

Item	Units	# Of Units	Unit Cost	Total Per Item ($)
VEHICLES				
Passenger Minibus (Gasoline or Diesel)	Vehicles	1	$85,000	$85,000
35-Foot Bus (Diesel or Natural Gas)	Vehicles	2	$700,000	$1,400,000
SUPPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE				
Bus Stop Landing Pad (estimated)		10	$2,000	$20,000
Bus Stop ID Poll (estimated)		75	$200	$15,000
Bus Shelter and Bench		6	$8,000	$48,000
TOTAL				**$1,568,000**

6.2.2 Annual Operating Costs

Annual operating costs include fuel, regular maintenance, and labour and are estimated based on annual service provision and a typical all-inclusive hourly rate, indexed to peer systems. Based on the recommended service level, annual operating costs are estimated at around $413,000 (see **Table 6-2**).

As costs are directly tied to servicing, operating costs can be lowered by pursuing a more limited service pattern.

Table 6-2: Annual Operating Costs

Annual Service Hours	3,440
Cost per Service Hour	$120
Annual Operating Cost Estimate	$413,000

6.2.3 Financial Performance

Table 6-3 compares key financial metrics under low and high ridership projection scenarios, detailing expected revenue and operating costs for each case. The annual net operating cost of transit, as described, is anticipated as between $356,590 and $382,890, with a resulting cost per capita of between $45.09 and $48.41.

Table 6-3: Financial Performance

	Low	High
Ridership Projection (Routes 1 & 2)	**8,320**	**15,370**
Ridership Projection (Route 3)	**1,030**	**2,060**
Total Annual Revenue (Routes 1 &2)	$24,960	$46,110
Total Annual Revenue (Route 3)	$5,150	$10,300
Total Annual Revenue (System)	$30,110	$56,410
Operating Cost	$413,000	$413,000
Net Operating Cost	$382,890	$356,590
Cost Recovery	**8%**	**16%**
Cost per Capita	$48.41	$45.09

6.2.4 Scalability

Implementing a transit service represents a financial investment, and it is recognized that the Municipality may wish to consider the level of service it is comfortable supporting. The recommended option has been designed to be scalable, allowing the Municipality to adjust service levels and associated costs to align with its needs and available funding.

For example, the recommended transit solution can be scaled back by operating on a limited schedule (e.g., twice per week from September through June), while maintaining a full service during the summer months (with routes 1, 2 and 3 operating five days per week). This scenario would result in approximately 2,040 annual service hours and an estimated annual operating cost of $245,300, $111,290-$137,590 less than the full implementation recommended above.

Additional service variations are also possible and can be explored by the Municipality based on ridership, priorities, and available funding (see **Table 4-1**). Overall cost will vary depending on level of service selected.

6.3 Funding Opportunities

Securing necessary funding is essential for implementing and sustaining a public transit service. Municipalities have the potential to draw on various funding sources to cover capital and ongoing operation costs. Leveraging these resources could aid in supporting both the implementation and long-term viability of public transit in Drumheller.

6.3.1 Canada Public Transit Fund

The Canada Public Transit Fund (CPTF) is a major federal program introduced in 2024 to enhance public transit and active transportation infrastructure nationwide. Starting 2026-2027, the CPTF will deliver $3 billion annually in stable, predictable funding, enabling municipalities to plan and implement long-term transit projects with confidence. It will address diverse needs of communities across the country including large metropolitan areas, smaller municipalities, and rural, remote, northern and indigenous communities. CPTF funding will be allocated through three different streams as outlined in **Table 6-4**.

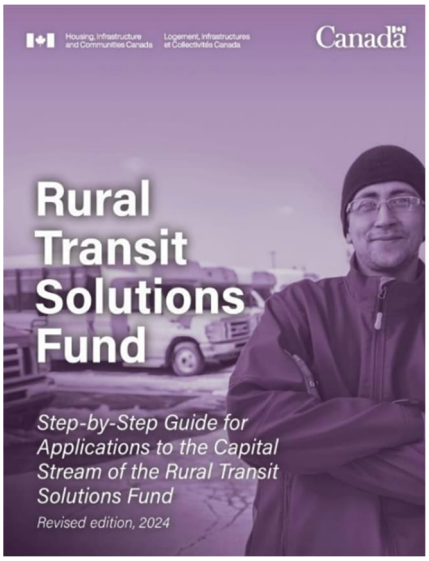
Table 6-4: Summary of CPTF Funding Streams

Funding Stream	Purpose of Stream	Process and Eligibility
Metro-Region Agreements (MRAS)	• Targets large urban areas with high transit demand and cross-boundary travel • Promotes integrated regional planning linking transit, housing and land use. • Supports major projects such as subway expansions, dedicated bus lanes and system maintenance	**Process:** 1. Expression of interest (EOI): Metro-regions signal readiness 2. Integrated Regional Plan (IRP): Outlines 10-year investment strategy 3. Metro-Region Agreement: Formal long-term funding commitment 4. Project Funding Applications and Contribution Agreements: For specific projects **Eligibility:** • Must include provincial governments and regional entities responsible for transit, housing and land use

Funding Stream	Purpose of Stream	Process and Eligibility
Baseline Funding	• Support communities with existing public transit systems • Provides $500 million annually for communities with existing transit systems • Focuses on routine investments, system expansion, rehabilitation, and planning	**Eligibility:** • Provide three to five years of historical ridership, population served and capital investment data • Existing public transit system includes fixed route service • Have a minimum average historical investment of $100,000 annually • Have a minimum annual ridership of 30,000
Targeted Funding	• Provides regular opportunities for specific public transit and active transportation projects. • Supports initiatives such as rural transit, school transportation and active travel infrastructure	**Process:** • Different programming offered under this stream with varying requirements. • Current programming includes: Rural Transit Solutions Fund, Zero Emissions Transit Fund and Active Transportation Fund

Communities seeking CPTF funding must implement measures to unlock housing supply near transit, enabling faster and more affordable home construction.

6.3.2 Rural Transit Solutions Fund



The Rural Transit Solutions Fund (RTSF) provides financial support to develop and expand locally driven transit services in rural, remote, indigenous and Northern communities. Its goal is to improve access to essential services, employment, education and social connections. This study has been prepared in part with funding from the RTSF through the Planning and Design Stream.

The RTSF supports a range of transit models including:

- Fixed route services
- On-demand transit
- Micromobility options (e.g. e-bikes)

Under the Capital Stream, applicants may receive up to $10 million for eligible capital assets such as vehicles and infrastructure. Eligible capital costs include:

- Vehicles (buses, vans, zero-emission vehicles)
- Infrastructure (shelter, signage)
- Accessibility features
- Professional service fees
- Active transportation components (e.g. short walking/bike paths, bike racks, lighting)
- Micromobility (e-bikes, charging stations as part of larger transit projects)
- Start-up costs

To qualify, applicants must complete a feasibility study analysing community characteristics such as geography, population, and economic conditions to ensure the project is realistic and financially sustainable. **The feasibility study you are reading satisfies this objective.** Projects must also meet at least one of the following objectives:

1. Increase transit use relative to car travel
2. Contribute to climate change mitigation and resilience
3. Improve transit options for all, especially equity deserving groups

Additional application requirements are outlined in **Table 6-5**.

Table 6-5: Summary of RTSF Application Requirements

Requirements for Applications	Details Required
Project details	• Project rationale explaining how the project is supporting the objective of the RTSF and why the project is needed • List of the type and quantity of assets that will be purchased • Explanation of if/how the project will include reducing green house gas emissions and/or mitigate impacts of climate change • Estimates on how the project will improve public transit, notably ridership
Project finances	• The federal funding being requested • The organization's financial contribution • Other sources of funding, including in-kind contributions and partner funding
Cost estimates on assets applicants plan to acquire	• Quantity and type of each asset • Cost for acquiring assets • Cost to meet regulatory requirements • Cost of operations and maintenance • Cost relating to consulting or engagement with Indigenous peoples

7. Implementation

Provided Council decides to move forward, a draft implementation schedule is provided in **Table 7-1,** pending Council approval. The implementation timeline may need to be modified to align with the RTSF intake period which is unknown at this time

Table 7-1: Draft Implementation Schedule

Activities	Q1 Year 1	Q2 Year 1	Q3 Year 1	Q4 Year 1	Q1 Year 2	Q2 Year 2	Q3 Year 2	Q4 Year 2
Council Endorsement								
Funding Applications								
Service Procurement								
Contract Award								
Marketing and Education								
Service Launch								

7.1 Marketing, Education and Monitoring

Successful implementation of a new transit system will require strong communication and ongoing evaluation to ensure it is meeting community needs. Marketing and public education helps residents understand how to use the system, the routing and schedule as well as benefits of using public transit.

When first introducing a public transit system to the Municipality, clear communication and outreach are essential to build awareness and encourage ridership. The Municipality should develop a focused marketing and education plan that explains the service, schedule, fare structure and accessibility features in simple terms. Steps may include the creation of a dedicated webpage, posting updates on social media and distributing printed materials such as brochures and posters at key community locations. Additionally, providing pop-ups at community events and festivals can help reach a broader audience.

Public education should include guidance on how to plan trips, pay fares and access the service safely. Outreach efforts should target seniors, students, persons with disabilities and the vulnerable population to ensure equitable access. These activities should begin before the service launch and continue during initial months to support adoption.

7.2 Monitoring

Monitoring is essential to assess the performance of the new transit system and to determine whether adjustments or service changes are needed. The municipality should establish a structured monitoring framework that includes both quantitative and qualitative measures. Key indicators should include:

- **Ridership Levels:** Track daily and weekly passenger counts and boarding locations to understand demand patterns and identify peak activity times.
- **On-Time Performance:** Measure schedule adherence to ensure reliability and identify operational issues.
- **Customer Feedback:** Collect input through surveys to gauge the satisfaction of the community, identify areas for improvement, and evaluate additional prospective periods of operation.
- **Cost and Revenue Analysis:** Monitor operating costs against fare revenue to evaluate financial sustainability.
- **Safety and Accessibility Compliance:** Review safety performance and accessibility standards to ensure all riders can use the service comfortably.

Steps to implement monitoring include installing data collection systems that count boardings and setting up regular reporting. Findings should be used to guide adjustments such as potential route changes, schedule modifications or service expansion. If ridership remains low or costs exceed projections, the Municipality can consider scaling back the service. On the other hand, strong demand may justify adding stops, increasing frequency or expanding the route. Continuous monitoring ensures the service remains responsive to community needs while remaining financially viable.

Monitoring should be conducted after a ramp-up period of at least 1 year to allow time for travel patterns to adjust to the new service.

Appendix A

What We Heard Report

What We Heard

VALLEY CONNECT OPEN HOUSE
FEBRUARY 2026

#DESTINATION Drumheller
DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Travel Drumheller

Valley Connect

Version date: 13 March 2026

The Details

VALLEY CONNECT

Valley Connect is about connecting people, places and possibilities. It's a starting point for Drumheller to explore how public transportation can help our community. Valley Connect combines two linked projects: a **summer shuttle bus pilot** and a long-term **feasibility study.**

OPEN HOUSE

An Open House was held on **Wednesday February 25**, 2026 from 4-7pm in a banquet hall at the Badlands Community Facility. Thank you to the **over 50 community members who attended**. The purpose of the Open House was to share information about Valley Connect and provide opportunities for community feedback. Staff from Travel Drumheller, and our consultant, WSP, were on-hand. Information shared included:

- An overview of the project and community touch points shared through a video/slideshow
- Existing transportation conditions and trends, service options and route ideas related to the Feasibility Study, prepared by WSP (11 panels)
- The route and schedule for the pilot shuttle bus and information on the central stop options (3 panels).

The community was able to **provide feedback** on:

- the Feasibility Study draft routes shared by WSP, and
- the graphic showing the route and timetable for the summer shuttle bus pilot.

The community was able to **vote to directly choose the location of the central bus stop**, based on three options that meet safety, access and operational needs. Voting on the Open House was extended into the community, with online voting shared on Facebook from February 26 to March 1.

The Details

OUTREACH

A range of tools were used to invite the community to the Open House. Tools included:

- posters on community boards,
- articles in local e-newsletters,
- content on both the Travel Drumheller and Town of Drumheller websites,
- coverage by local media,
- paid ads in the newspaper and on Facebook and
- presenting to both the Town of Drumheller Committee of the Whole and Community Business Association.

DRUMHELLER ONLINE

NEWS WEATHER FEATURES CONTACT

New Shuttle Bus Pilot Coming To Drumheller

Jason Blanke
Feb 9, 2026 | 10:58 AM

Travel Drumheller Staff and Destination Development Plan Steering Committee members celebrate local support for the summer shuttle bus pilot with Heather Bitz from the Chamber, and Martina Tran from Community Futures; image courtesy of Travel Drumheller

Something the Drumheller Valley has needed for a long time, is looking to start with a pilot project this summer.

Travel Drumheller, along with the Drumheller and District Chamber of Commerce and Community Futures Big Country are debuting a summer shuttle

What We Heard

FEASIBILITY STUDY ROUTES

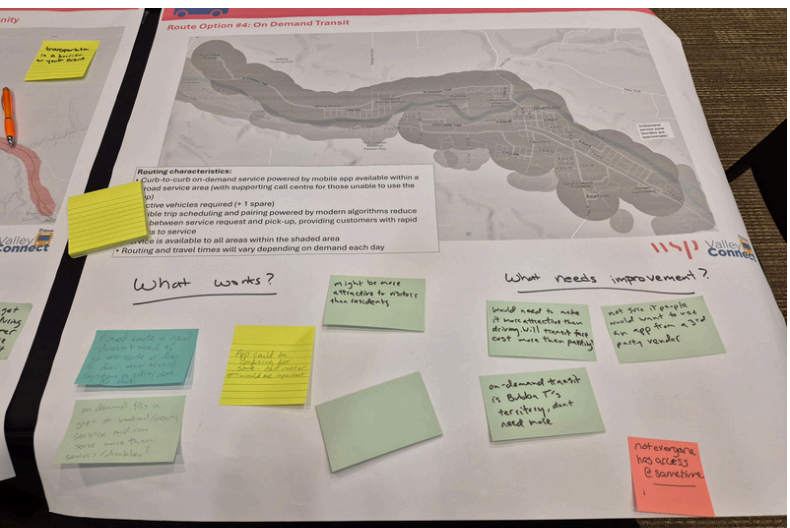
Four draft routes were shared at the Open House, and the community were welcome to share what they liked, or did not like, for each route.

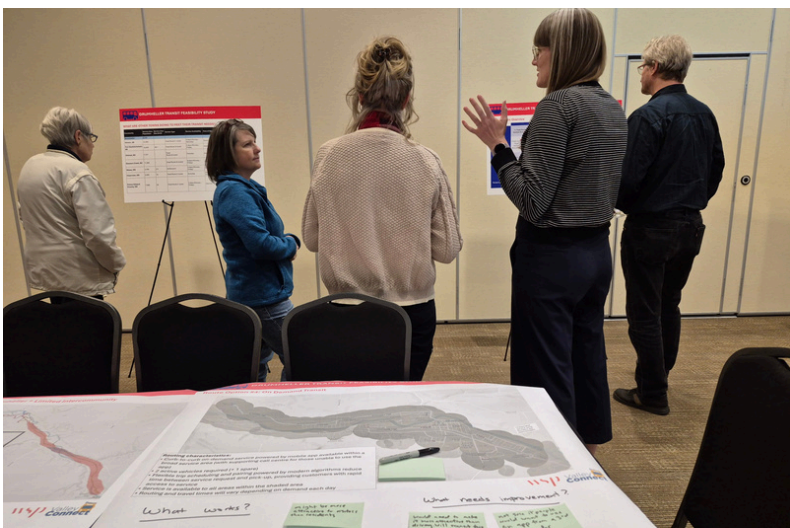
1. Fixed Route – Central Drumheller
2. Fixed Route – Central Drumheller + Intercommunity
3. Fixed Route – Central Drumheller + Limited Intercommunity
4. On Demand Transit

Many discussions were had and comments shared at the Open House on the routes. The broad takeaways from the community that attend are:

- More interest in a fixed route approach, with concerns about an on-demand service.
- Interest in providing some service beyond central Drumheller to access places like East Coulee and Rosedale.
- An understanding of the value and potential need for public transit for certain people, such as youth and seniors, in the community
- Curiosity about a how a service would be paid for, and would relate to the existing Valley Bus service (municipally subsidized accessible transportation limited to seniors and people with disabilities)

The comments shared will inform the final Feasibility Study, which will be available to the community in June 2026.

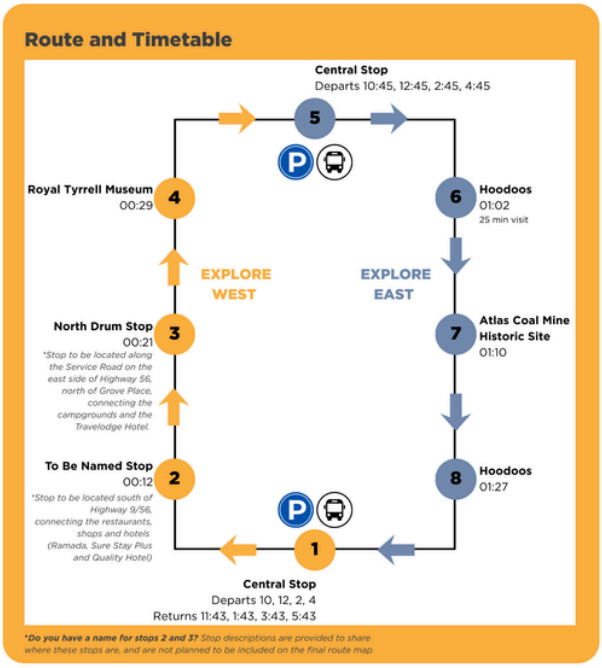




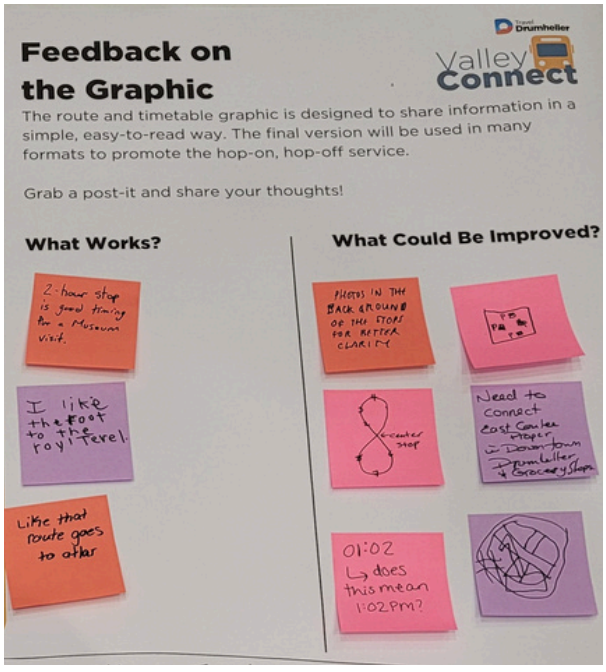
What We Heard

PILOT SHUTTLE BUS GRAPHIC

A graphic of the pilot shuttle bus route and timetable was shared, along with more details on when the bus would run, and how the route was designed. The feedback opportunity was focused on providing ideas on names for two stops and insights on the legibility of the graphic.



Comments on the stop name were clear – name it based on the location of the stop. Either the road or adjacent business/attraction. Comments on the graphic suggested a figure 8 approach, or the use of photos to provide clarity to where the stop is. The time stamps used on the graphic were not clear to everyone.



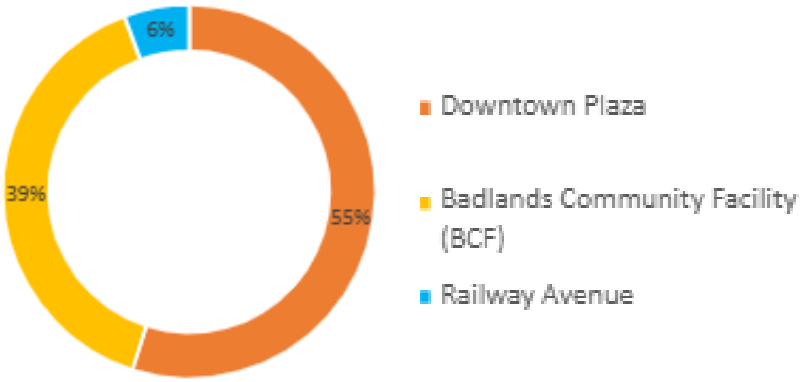
The comments shared will be provided to the graphic designer for consideration in creation of the final route/timetable graphic. The graphic will anchor the promotion of the hop-on, hop-off service over the spring and summer.

What We Heard

CENTRAL STOP LOCATION

Three stop locations were marked on a map for the community to select as a central bus stop location: the Badlands Community Facility, the Downtown Plaza, and Railway Avenue (west of Shoppers Drug Mart). Plus, each option was rated against a number of factors. The question posed to cast a vote was "*After reviewing the options, which location do you think best serves Drumheller as a starting point for the central bus stop?*"

A total of 71 votes were cast – 41 at the Open House, 30 online. The **community selected central stop for the pilot is the Downtown Plaza**, with 55% of the votes.



The Downtown Plaza stop will act as the main hub for the route, with buses stopping here at the start, middle, and end of each loop. It will also connect the local shuttle with the Calgary intercity bus service that is in the works for this summer.

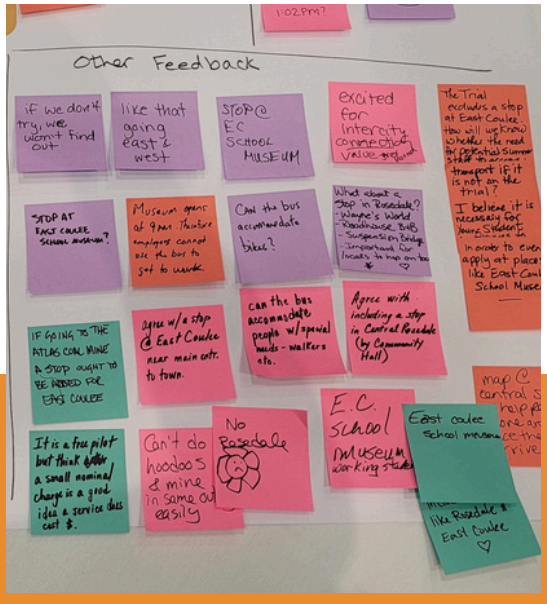
What We Heard

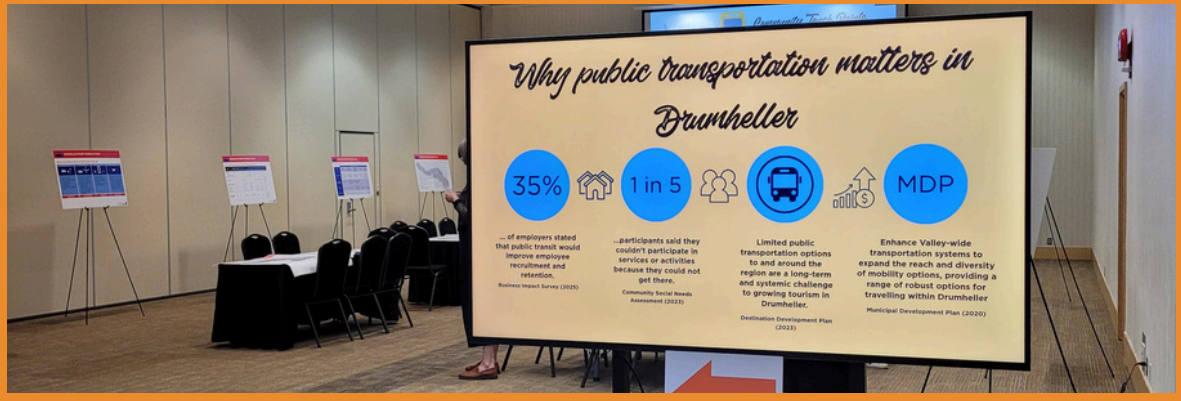
OTHER COMMENTS

The route and timetable graphic garnered a range of comments on the route itself, rather than the graphic. These comments reinforced a desire for transportation opportunities in East Coulee and Rosedale, reinforcing the learnings from the Feasibility Study route comments.

Additionally, people shared their opinions on why people, specifically locals, may/may not take the bus and raised operational questions.

The comments will inform future FAQs created for the project. The addition of East Coulee to the pilot is under consideration.





What We Learned

LESSONS LEARNED

As a pilot project, there is a focus on learning from shuttle bus operations to inform future public transportation. With a learning mindset, there is value in reflecting upon the Open House as a tool for sharing information and gathering feedback. Based on community comments and project team reflections:

What worked

- Inviting people to the Open House in many different ways.
- Having both WSP and Travel Drumheller staff on hand for discussion and questions.

What could be improved

- The service option information and draft routes could be better connected to make it easier to understand.
- The project overview video could have numbered slides so you know where you are when you start watching part way through the loop.

Next Steps

The Valley Connect project continues with the hop-on, hop-off bus service launching in late June and the final Feasibility Study report coming in mid-June.

You can keep informed and support Valley Connect by:

- signing up for the Destination Development e-Newsletter
- visiting the project website: www.traveldrumheller.com/destination-drumheller
- reaching out with any funding opportunities or donations
- ride the bus!

This document is part of Valley Connect project, which is one way we're working together to implement the region's tourism plan, the Destination Development Plan (DDP). The vision of the DDP is to be an iconic year-round destination grounded in community.

Curiosities and insights can be shared with our Destination Development Manager:

- Lana Phillips, 403-436-0136
- destinationdevelopment@traveldrumheller.com

www.traveldrumheller.com/destination-drumheller

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#DESTINATION Drumheller DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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