



Final Report

VALLEY CONNECT PROJECT SUMMARY
AND RECOMMENDATIONS
SEPTEMBER 2026

#DESTINATION
Drumheller
DEVELOPMENT PLAN



Executive Summary

Valley Connect was created as a starting point for public transportation in Drumheller. Led by Travel Drumheller, the project combined two pieces of work: a public transportation feasibility study and a free, hop-on, hop-off shuttle bus pilot. Together, they provided technical analysis, real-world operating experience and community feedback to help inform future transportation decisions.

WSP completed the Feasibility Study between September 2025 and June 2026. It examined potential routes, service models, vehicles, fares and costs. The study recommended a scalable fixed-route service connecting central Drumheller with limited intercommunity service and seasonal expansion during the summer.

The Valley Connect shuttle operated on Fridays and Saturdays for 20 days between late June and late August 2026. Its East and West loops connected Downtown Plaza with attractions, accommodations, campgrounds, shopping and other services throughout the valley. The pilot also connected with the seasonal FlixBus service between Drumheller and Calgary.

The pilot provided 921 rides and served every stop on the route. Saturdays accounted for 65% of rides, and the West Loop carried slightly more riders than the East Loop. Although the shuttle was generally not overcrowded, 7% of loops operated at or near capacity. Feedback from 104 survey respondents was overwhelmingly positive, resulting in a Net Promoter Score of 75. Riders reported that the service helped them visit more attractions, made their trips less stressful and encouraged additional local spending. The pilot is conservatively estimated to have directed more than \$15,000 to local businesses and attractions.

Executive Summary

Community input also showed support for continued work on public transportation. At the September 2026 Recreation, Arts and Wellness Exhibit, 32 of 35 participants—91%—said they would encourage Town Council to take a next step. The Strengthen and Open options received the greatest support.

Based on the Feasibility Study, pilot findings and community input, this report recommends that the Town of Drumheller include the next steps for public transportation in its 2027 operating plans and budget. The recommended approach begins by strengthening the existing Valley Bus service and developing a multi-year public transportation plan, while also establishing a one-day-a-week fixed-route service open to everyone. This approach would build on existing services and allow public transportation to grow as community needs, demand and funding permit.

Thank You!

Valley Connect was made possible through the efforts and contributions of many people and organizations. Every contribution—whether providing funding or expertise, operating or hosting the service, sharing information, offering feedback or taking a ride—helped bring the project to life.

This project is funded in part by the Government of Canada (Rural Transit Solutions Fund – Feasibility Study) and the Province of Alberta (Small Community Opportunity Program). Matching contributions provided by Travel Drumheller.

Project Leadership and Guidance

Travel Drumheller led Valley Connect as part of its work to implement the Destination Development Plan. Lana Phillips managed the project, including its planning, partnerships, community engagement, pilot delivery and evaluation.

Travel Drumheller thanks all current and past members of the Destination Development Plan Steering Committee for contributing their time, experience and community perspectives.

Current Steering Committee members

Cameron Spence	Jennifer Dickson	Rahul Gunjal
Cheryl Taylor	Jessica Fleury	Reg Johnston
Jared Brounstein	Lana Phillips	Trisha Breault
Jenna Kester	Matthew Kiemele	Tyler Eddy



Thank You!

Funding and Project Support

- The Drumheller and District Chamber of Commerce and Community Futures Big Country for sponsoring shuttle operations
- Travel Alberta, the Town of Drumheller and the Royal Tyrrell Museum for their project support
- The many organizations that supported funding applications and contributed time, resources and expertise

Service and Technical Partners

- Bubba T's Bus Tours and Shuttle Service for operating the Valley Connect shuttle
- WSP for its expertise in completing the Feasibility Study
- FlixBus, including Rafi Tumarkin (Business Development, Canada), for working with Travel Drumheller to establish and coordinate the seasonal intercity service
- Francisco Collantes making the initial outreach that brought Drumheller to FlixBus's attention
- The organizations that hosted shuttle stops: Atlas Coal Mine National Historic Site, Canadian Tire, East Coulee School Museum, Town of Drumheller, and the Royal Tyrrell Museum

Our Community

Thank you to everyone who shared an idea, completed a survey, attended an event, promoted the service or took a ride. Your participation helped test the service, strengthen the findings and demonstrate the value of improved transportation options.

We have made every effort to recognize those who contributed to Valley Connect. If we have inadvertently missed anyone, please know that your contribution was appreciated and made a difference.

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Project Overview

Valley Connect is a starting point for public transportation in Drumheller and beyond. The project combined a pilot shuttle bus and a feasibility study to explore how public transportation could better connect people, places and opportunities in our community.

Valley Connect refers to both the overall project and the pilot shuttle service. Travel Drumheller led the project as part of implementing the region's tourism plan, the Destination Development Plan (DDP). The DDP identified limited public transportation as a long-term, system-wide challenge for tourism in the region.

Tourism is a major part of the local economy, but the benefits of better transportation extend beyond visitors. Transportation within the Valley can support:

- **Economic growth:** Helping residents and visitors move more easily throughout Drumheller, explore more places and spend at local businesses.
- **Access to employment:** Expanding the pool of workers available to local businesses and reducing transportation barriers for youth, newcomers and others without vehicles.
- **Housing choice:** Allowing residents to consider housing in more parts of the valley while still being able to reach work, services and other destinations.
- **Community participation:** Helping residents reach work, appointments, shopping, recreation and community activities, and supporting greater independence.
- **Environmental benefits:** Offering a shared travel option that may have less environmental impact than individual vehicle trips.

Project Overview

Transportation into and out of the Valley was not part of the project's original scope. However, when an opportunity arose, Travel Drumheller collaborated with FlixBus on a seasonal connection to Calgary, including Calgary International Airport. This connection gave residents another travel option and made Drumheller more accessible to visitors travelling without a private vehicle.

Existing community plans and research also identify the importance of public transportation in Drumheller:



Project Overview

Travel Drumheller worked with community partners to plan, fund, operate, promote and evaluate the project.

The project was guided by the Destination Development Plan Steering Committee. Established in July 2023, the committee provides community and regional input on the implementation of the tourism plan. Its current term runs from June 2025 to October 2026. Previous projects have included refreshing the brown tourism signs and completing the summer visitor survey.

The committee includes representatives from local government, business, tourism and the community across Drumheller, Kneehill, Wheatland and Starland.

The Travel Drumheller Executive Director and Project Manager co-chair the committee, which generally meets five times each year.

This report provides a final summary of Valley Connect, with a focus on the shuttle bus pilot. Together with the Feasibility Study, it gives the community and Town Council information to consider the next steps for public transportation in Drumheller.

Project Overview

SHUTTLE BUS PILOT

The shuttle bus pilot provided a real service that the community could use and learn from. It also helped demonstrate how public transportation could work in Drumheller.

A pilot is a small-scale test that allows an idea to be tried with less risk. It is designed to collect information, identify improvements and test assumptions; it is not expected to be a perfect version of a permanent service. More details about the Valley Connect pilot are provided later in this report.

FEASIBILITY STUDY

A feasibility study examines whether a service could work and what it might look like. Through an open request for proposals, Travel Drumheller hired WSP to complete a transit feasibility study for Drumheller. From September 2025 to June 2026, WSP assessed potential routes and stops, fixed-route and on-demand service options, vehicle types, fares, and capital and operating costs. The work included a community survey, interviews and an open house. The completed study was presented to the Town of Drumheller Committee of the Whole on June 9, 2026. It also summarized the 2009 Transit Feasibility Study, which recommended a fixed-route community bus.

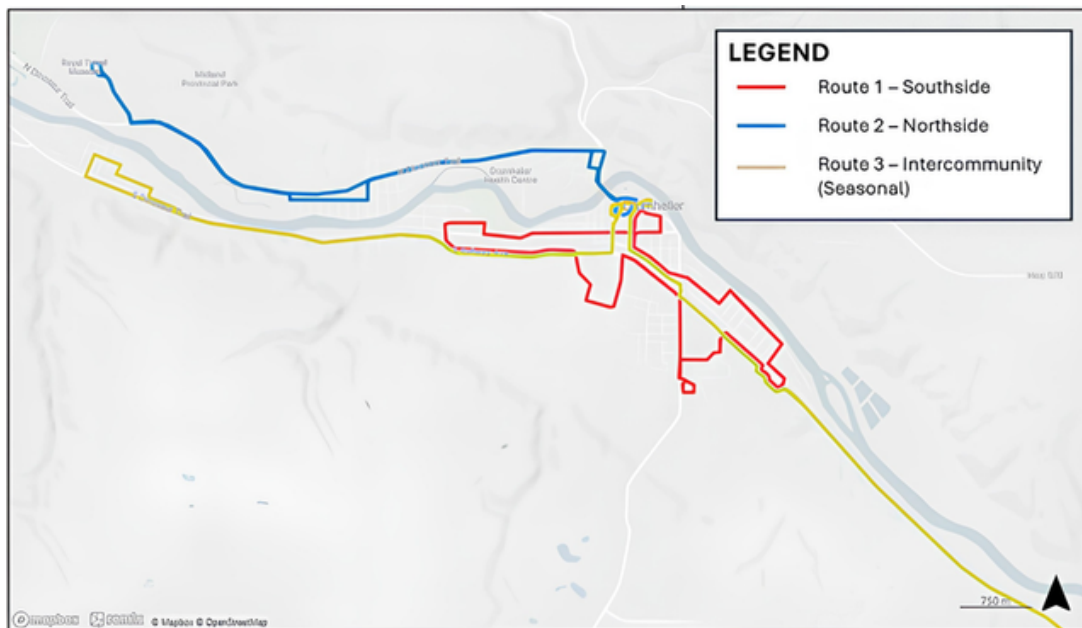
The full study provides the detailed analysis. For convenience, its recommended option—Option 3—is summarized here. Three points are important when considering the recommendation:

- Transit supports access to daily life and community participation
- The recommended service can be scaled over time
- Capital funding for rural transit may be available

Project Overview

Recommended Option 3 Fixed Route Central Drumheller and Limited Intercommunity Service.

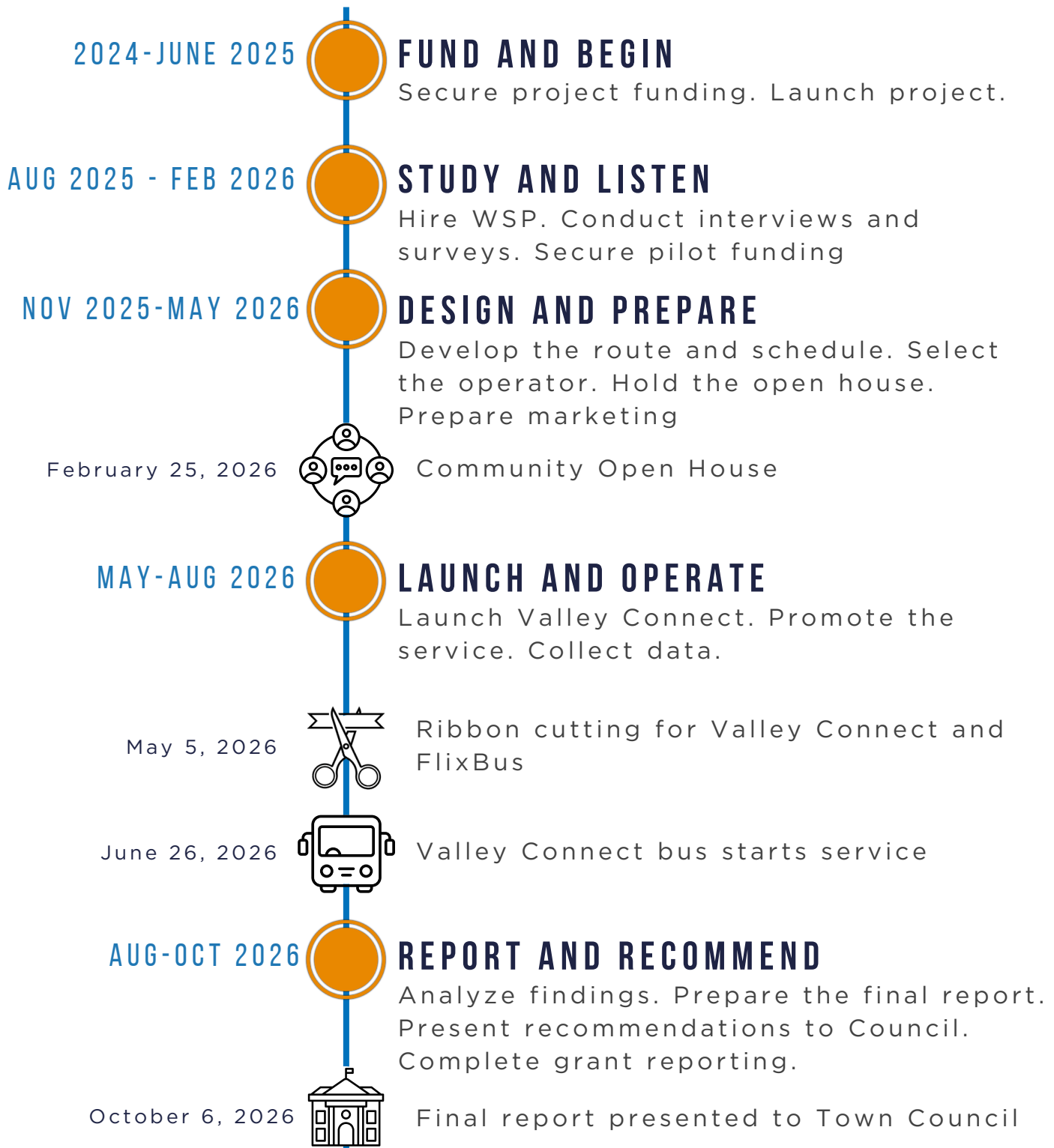
WSP recommended Option 3 because it would provide consistent, predictable service, connect key destinations and balance coverage with cost. It could also add seasonal summer service to support tourism without building more service than the community currently needs.



WSP recommended bus routes

Route	Two core routes in central Drumheller One seasonal summer route Hub at the Badlands Community Facility
Service	Weekday service from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. 90-minute frequency Expanded seasonal service in July and August
Ridership	9,300–17,400 annual rides
Vehicles	Scaled to demand Two active vehicles and one spare required in summer One active vehicle during the rest of the year

Project Overview



Drumheller Transportation

As in most Canadian communities, private vehicles are the main way people travel in Drumheller. The community faces two distinct transportation challenges: travelling to other centres, such as Calgary, for goods and services that are not available locally; and travelling within the Valley, which extends nearly 50 kilometers and includes several communities.

Valley Connect focused on transportation within Drumheller. A reliable local connection can also make regional transportation more useful by helping people reach their destinations once they arrive in the Valley.

TRANSPORTATION IN DRUMHELLER

Private vehicles account for about 90% of trips in Drumheller.¹

Walking is the next most common form of travel at 6.4%, while cycling accounts for a small share of trips. Walking and cycling opportunities have improved through Rails to Trails, the conversion of the former railway corridor into a pathway.

Taxi service is available, but the number of providers, vehicles and operating hours varies.

The Valley Bus Society is a municipally subsidized society that provides door-to-door transportation for seniors and people with disabilities. Valley Bus is an important part of Drumheller's transportation system. Since May 2023, the Valley Bus Society has contracted a private operator to provide the service.

More information on transportation in Drumheller, including the Valley Bus and other organizations providing specialized transportation support is provided in Appendix A.

Drumheller Transportation

TRANSPORTATION TO DRUMHELLER

Most people travel to Drumheller by private vehicle. Charter and tour operators also bring visitors to the community, primarily during the summer.

Drumheller had no regular intercity bus service after Greyhound Canada stopped service in Alberta in 2018. Seasonal intercity bus service from Calgary to Drumheller returned, with FlixBus operating from mid-May to mid-September 2026. Appendix B provides more information about the FlixBus service.



Photo: FlixBus at the Royal Tyrrell Museum

Pilot Overview

VALLEY CONNECT

The Valley Connect pilot provided residents and visitors with a free, hop-on, hop-off shuttle to travel around and explore the Drumheller Valley.

When the Shuttle Ran

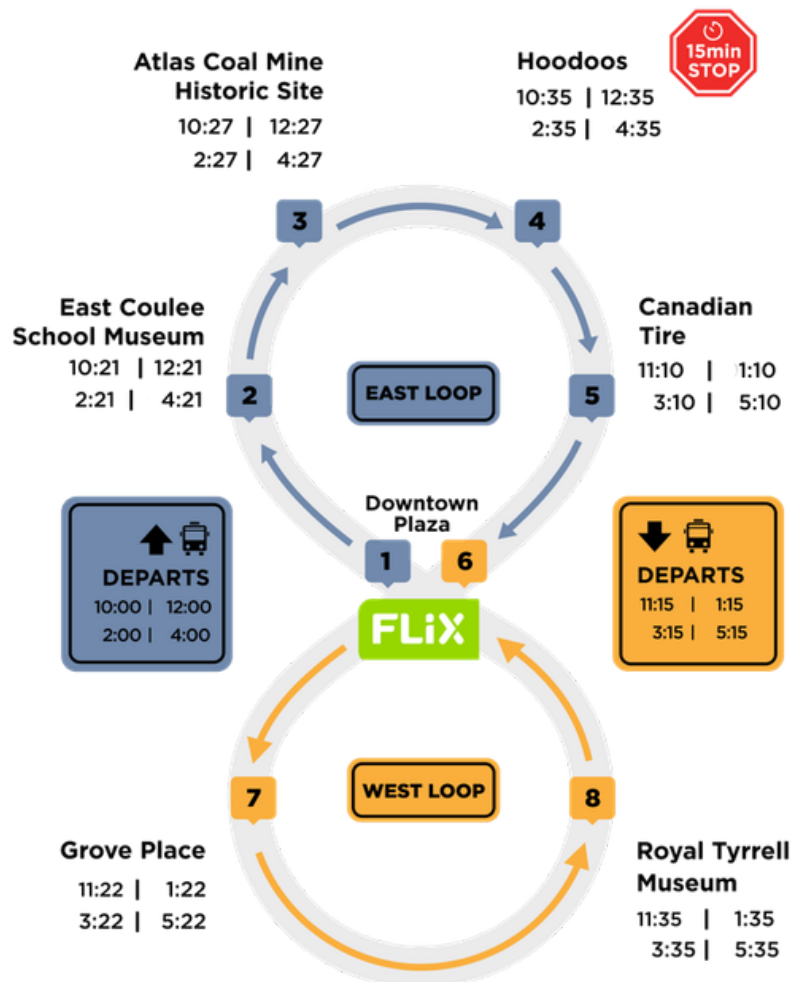
- Fridays and Saturdays
- From late June to late August
- 20 service days over 10 weeks

About the Route

The shuttle route:

- Connected key attractions
- Served both the east and west ends of the valley
- Operated from 10:00 a.m. to 5:45 p.m.
- Returned every two hours, with four trips per day in each direction

The route had two loops, the East Loop and West Loop, which connected at the Downtown Plaza. FlixBus also stopped at the plaza, allowing passengers to transfer directly between the services. Each Valley Connect route ran every two hours.



Valley Connect Bus Route and Schedule

Pilot Overview

The East Loop left Downtown Plaza on the hour and stopped at East Coulee School Museum, Atlas Coal Mine National Historic Site, the Hoodoos and Canadian Tire. At the Hoodoos, the bus paused for 15 to 20 minutes so riders could walk the guided path and take photos without waiting two hours for the next bus. The East Loop ran before the West Loop, giving visitors the option to explore the east valley or downtown before visiting the Royal Tyrrell Museum.

The West Loop left Downtown Plaza at 15 minutes past the hour and stopped at Grove Place and the Royal Tyrrell Museum.

Canadian Tire and Grove Place provided access for guests staying at nearby hotels and campgrounds. The stops also connected riders to groceries, restaurants, shops and other everyday services.

Service FAQ's are shared in Appendix D.



Pilot Overview

FLIXBUS

FlixBus provides seasonal intercity bus service between Calgary and Drumheller. Travel Drumheller worked with FlixBus to coordinate schedules and establish Downtown Plaza as a shared central stop, making transfers between FlixBus and Valley Connect easier.

On Fridays and Saturdays, when Valley Connect operated, FlixBus stopped only at Downtown Plaza and Valley Connect transported passengers to the Royal Tyrrell Museum. On other operating days, FlixBus served both Downtown Plaza and the Royal Tyrrell Museum.

More information about the FlixBus service is provided in Appendix B.

FUNDING

Travel Drumheller secured and managed several funding sources for Valley Connect and provided the matching funds required by the grants. Hiring a local project manager, shuttle operator and other local businesses (eg. Image Crafters, C. Schatz Film & Photography) kept part of the project spending in the community. Funding sources included:

- Government of Canada, Rural Transit Solutions Fund, Planning and Design Projects Stream: Funded the Feasibility Study.
- Province of Alberta, Small Community Opportunity Program: Supported community outreach, marketing, promotion and project management. Travel Drumheller partnered with the Town of Drumheller to access this funding.
- Drumheller and District Chamber of Commerce and Community Futures Big Country: Supported shuttle operations, including fuel.

Local organizations also provided letters of support and in-kind assistance.

Pilot Overview

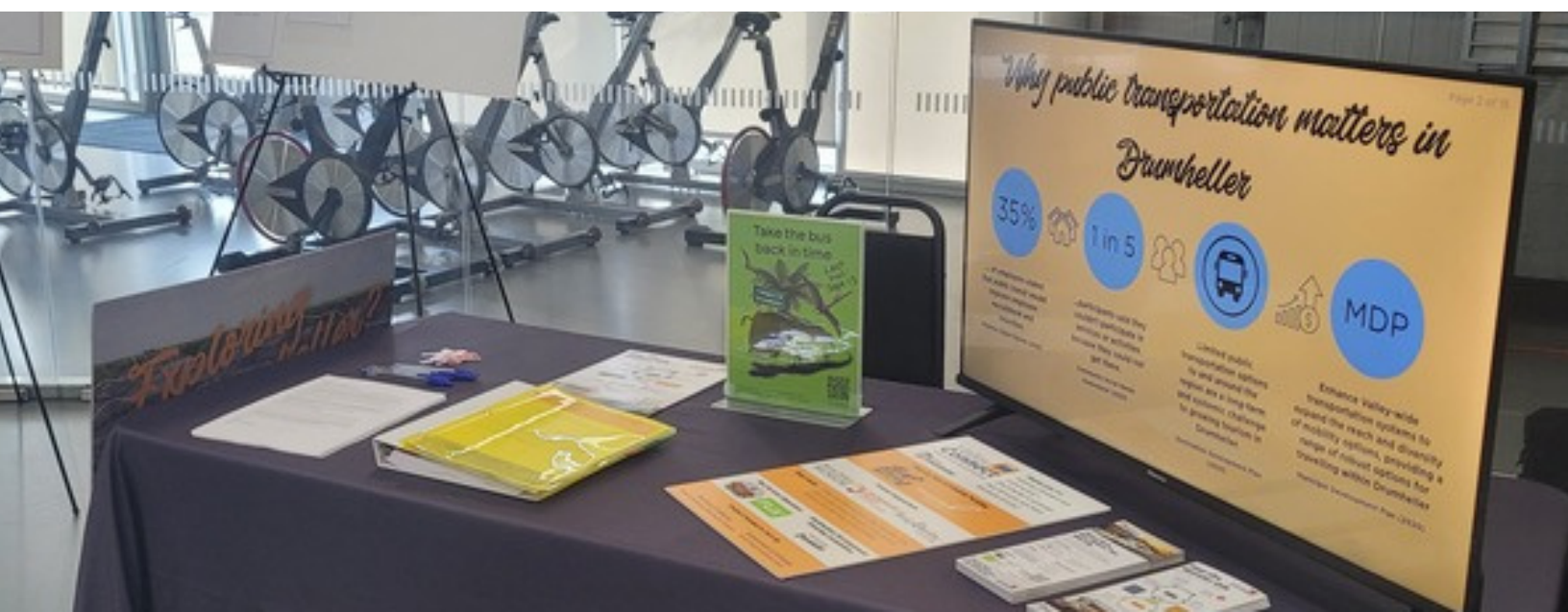
COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The community had several opportunities to learn about Valley Connect, share insights and help shape the project. Engagement included two surveys, interviews and three open houses. Community members contributed by:

- Completing the community survey at the Town's 2025 Recreation, Arts and Wellness Exhibit
- Voting at the open house to select the central stop from three options
- Helping inform the recommendations to Town Council at the Town's 2026 Recreation, Arts and Wellness Exhibit

The "What We Heard" document in Appendix A of the Feasibility Study summarizes the open house results, including the selection of Downtown Plaza as the central stop and the addition of an East Coulee stop.

Travel Drumheller attended community events and meetings with local organizations to build awareness of the project and bus service. Travel Drumheller presented formal project updates four times to Drumheller Town Council and the community. More details are shared in Appendix C.



Community Outreach

2025

Youth Survey

Aug/Sep Insights for community youth on the shuttle bus

Community Survey

Sep/Oct

Insights from community on public transportation

Exhibit

September 10 Introduce the project, collect survey responses

Interviews

Nov/Dec

Insights from key interest-holders

Open House

Learn about existing conditions, provide feedback on draft routes

Open House

February 25 Learn about the route & schedule. Choose the central bus stop

2026

Feasibility Study - Final Report

June 9 Presentation to Town of Drumheller Council

Ride the Bus

June 26 - August 29 Hop-on Hop-off monitoring & feedback

Exhibit

September 9 Gather input and share results from the shuttle bus pilot

Pilot/Project Final Report

October 6 Presentation to Town of Drumheller Council with next steps



Shuttle Bus Pilot



Feasibility Study

Pilot Overview

MARKETING

Marketing efforts built awareness throughout the project and encouraged people to use the bus. Local outreach included posters on community bulletin boards, social media posts, newspaper advertisements and media releases.

The shuttle bus pilot was also promoted through a dedicated webpage, radio, earned media coverage and online advertising, and stop locations published on Google Maps.



Photo: Ribbon cutting for Valley Connect and FlixBus

A ribbon-cutting event on May 5 launched Valley Connect and FlixBus. Travel Alberta provided media support, leading to coverage across Alberta in newspapers, online articles and radio interviews.

The figure-eight route map and schedule were the foundation of Valley Connect marketing and appeared on posters, brochures and bus stop signs. Materials were available at Town facilities, the Visitor Information Centre and World's Largest Dinosaur, Drumheller Public Library, Travel Drumheller, local hotels and campgrounds, bus stops, attractions and businesses. Community members and organizations were also invited to share the materials. More information is shared in Appendix C.

Pilot Overview

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection was essential to evaluating the pilot. At the outset, three measures of success were identified:

- People use the shuttle
- The shuttle makes it easier to travel around the valley
- The pilot gathers useful data and feedback for future transportation planning

Information came from two main sources:

1. Daily records completed by drivers
2. Rider surveys

The data measured the number of rides, where people boarded and exited, what worked well and what could be improved. Drivers recorded information each day. Riders could complete a paper survey on the bus or use a QR code to respond online.

Appendix E provides the driver-collected data, Appendix F provides the rider survey results and Appendix G provides the rider comments.

Findings and Results

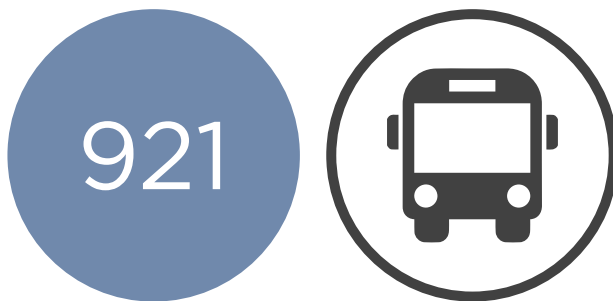
Based on the measures established at the start of the pilot, Valley Connect was successful because it:

- Provided 921 rides over 20 days of operation
- Made it easier for riders to travel around the valley, according to survey comments
- Collected daily operating data and feedback from 104 survey respondents

The findings can help:

- Shape future versions of Valley Connect or other public transportation services
- Refine marketing
- Compare transportation initiatives over time
- Support grant applications
- Demonstrate how transportation supports tourism and local economic development

The following sections summarize the findings. Appendices E, F and G provide the detailed data and comments.



... rides taken on the Valley Connect bus

10 weeks of service on Fridays and Saturdays

Driver Data Collection (2026)

Photo (Right) - Sticker found on the Downtown Plaza bus stop pole, reading "I ♥ Public Transportation"



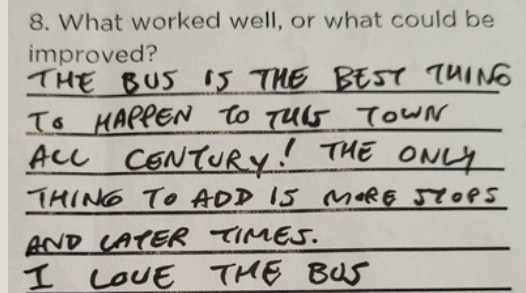
Findings and Results

WHAT PEOPLE SAID

Comments collected through rider surveys and conversations were overwhelmingly positive and supportive of the service.

Common themes included:

- Friendly and helpful drivers
- A positive overall experience
- Convenient stops and schedules



8. What worked well, or what could be improved?
THE BUS IS THE BEST THING
TO HAPPEN TO THIS TOWN
ALL CENTURY! THE ONLY
THING TO ADD IS MORE STOPS
AND LATER TIMES.
I LOVE THE BUS

Photo (Above) - Comments provided on a hard copy rider survey

This feedback aligns with the pilot's Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 75. NPS is a common measure of how likely people are to recommend a service. A score of 75 indicates a high level of rider support.

Most suggestions called for more service or additional stops. Riders asked for hourly service, more operating days and longer hours. Suggested destinations included Horseshoe Canyon, McMullen Island Day Use Area, Rosedale, Rosebud, Star Mine Suspension Bridge, Wayne, the World's Largest Dinosaur and scenic photo stops. Suggestions focused on local needs included Walmart, No Frills and Sam's Kitchen.

Survey responses and informal comments showed interest from both visitors and residents in a bus connection to Calgary. For some visitors, FlixBus made their trip to Drumheller possible. Residents described using the service to visit family, reach the airport and attend appointments. They also noted that family and friends used it to attend local events and a funeral, or simply to visit.

Findings and Results

In Their Own Words

All rider comments are shared in Appendix G.



"Bus service made an extremely difficult trek into a breezy ride."

"We got to see more than originally planned."

"We didn't have a rented car... The bus was a life saver."



"I spent the first 17 years of my life in the valley and a couple more in adulthood and I hadn't been aware that there were multiple coal mines, or about the composition of the valley hills layers, until today's ride!"



"If the service is available next year we would come to visit for a full weekend."

"We purchased from local businesses at every stop."

Findings and Results

WHAT THE DATA SAYS

Driver Collected Data

Driver records show how the bus was used, including when and where people boarded and exited and how many passengers were on board. This information helps identify where demand was strongest and can inform future decisions about operating days, schedules, stop locations and vehicle capacity. Key findings are summarized below, with detailed results provided in Appendix E.

The pilot provided 921 rides, with activity recorded at every stop. Downtown Plaza was the busiest stop, followed by the Royal Tyrrell Museum. Riders used the 15-minute Hoodoos stopover 300 times, and few stayed behind to wait for a later bus. Canadian Tire and Grove Place, which were intended to serve accommodations and everyday amenities, had limited use.

Canadian Tire and Grove Place, which were intended to connect accommodations and everyday amenities, had limited use. These results provide an opportunity to reconsider the location, purpose or promotion of similar stops in any future service.

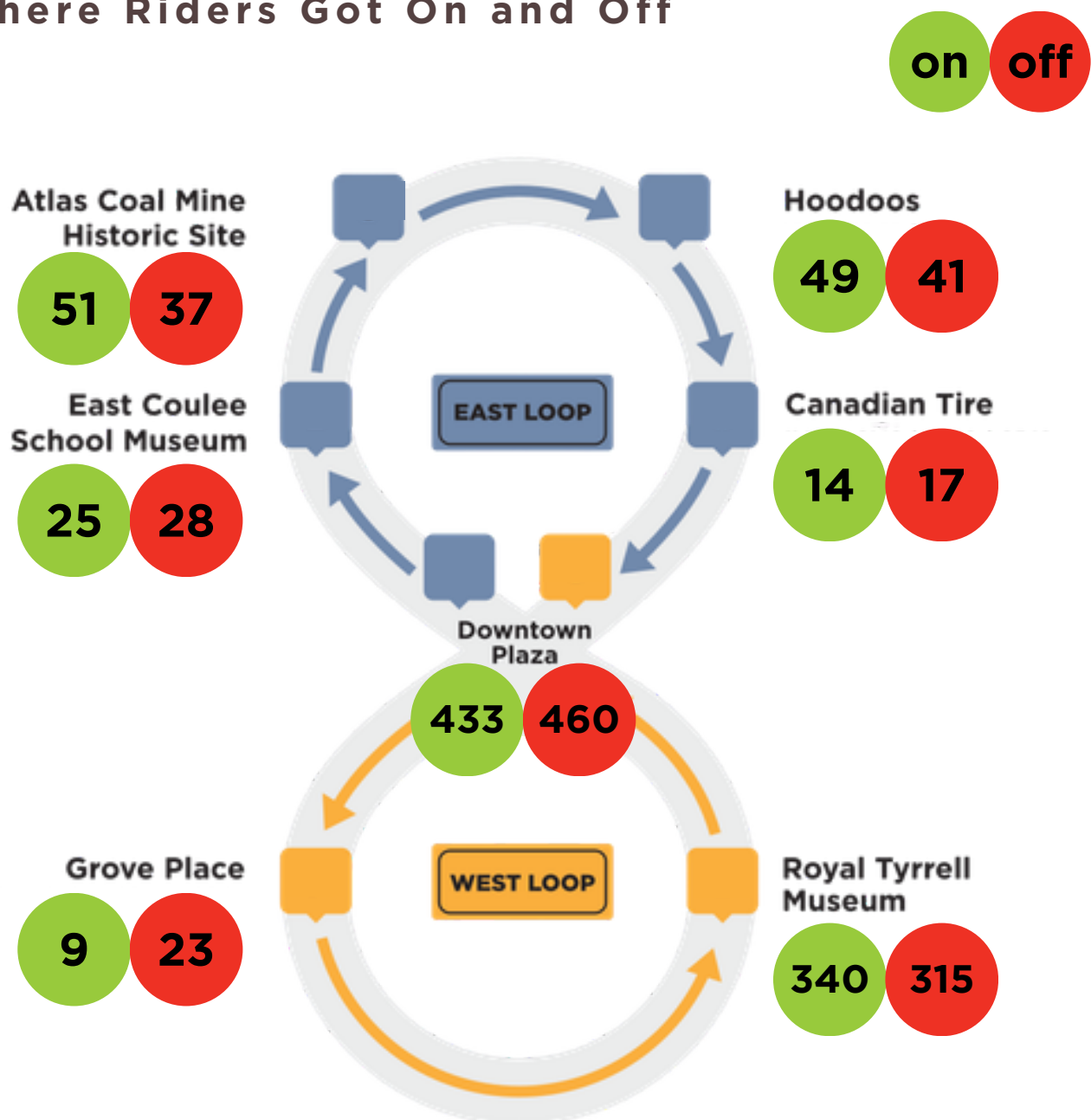
Demand was stronger on Saturdays, which accounted for 65% of rides compared with 35% on Fridays. Ridership was more evenly distributed between the two routes, with the West Loop carrying 54% of rides and the East Loop carrying 46%. These findings suggest that both loops served a purpose, while Saturday service attracted the greatest demand.

Overall, the service generally had enough capacity. Only 7% of loops operated at or near capacity, while just 10 of the 160 completed loops carried no riders. Future planning should maintain enough capacity for the busiest trips while examining whether schedules could be adjusted during periods of lower demand.

Findings and Results

FlixBus and Valley Connect ridership showed similar patterns over the pilot period. Higher FlixBus activity generally coincided with higher Valley Connect ridership. The results suggest Downtown Plaza functioned as planned, providing a connection point between these complementary services.

Where Riders Got On and Off

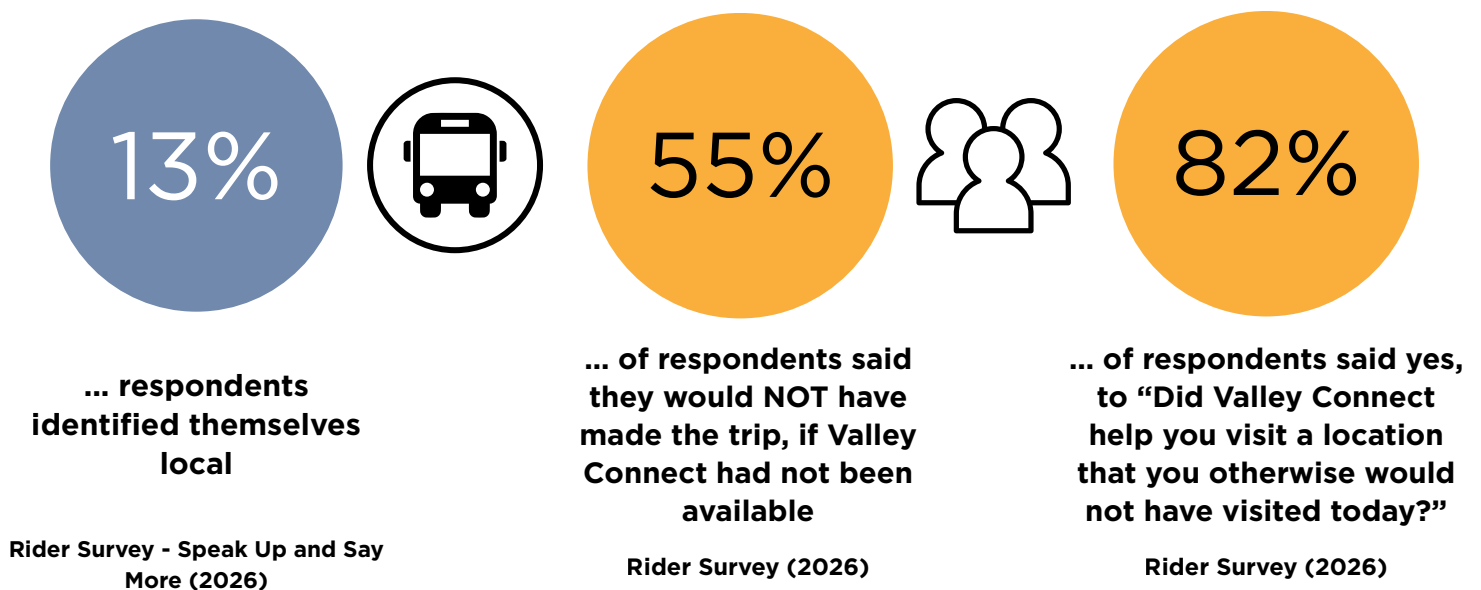


Findings and Results

Riders Survey

The rider surveys help explain the numbers collected by drivers. They show why people used Valley Connect, how the service affected their experience and what they valued or wanted improved. Together, these findings can help shape future service and demonstrate the broader value of transportation. Complete survey results and comments are provided in Appendices E and F.

A total of 104 riders completed the on-bus “Speak Up!” survey. Of those respondents, 47 agreed to receive the follow-up “Say More!” survey and 24 completed it.



Findings and Results

The responses show that Valley Connect did more than move people between stops. Among the 24 follow-up survey respondents, the leading reported impacts (per Question 3) were:

- Visiting more attractions (88%)
- Making their trip less stressful (83%)
- Spending more money locally (63%)

While no single benefit tells the whole story, the combined results show that the service supported their experience in Drumheller.

Based on the destinations riders visited and their potential spending, Valley Connect is conservatively estimated to have generated between \$15,000 and \$20,000 in spending at local businesses and attractions. This demonstrates how transportation can help visitors explore more of the valley while distributing tourism spending among more local destinations.

100%

... of respondents strongly agreed that “Valley Connect should continue beyond this pilot”

Rider Survey - Say More (2026)



Findings and Results

Community Input - Exhibit Results

Community input at the Town's Recreation, Arts and Wellness Exhibit showed strong interest in continuing the work toward public transportation. Of the 35 people who participated, 32 (91%) said they would encourage Town Council to take a next step. Three were unsure, and no one selected "no."

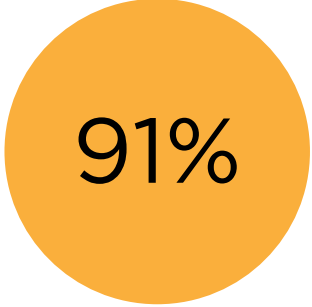
The two-part dot-voting activity was held on September 9, 2026, after participants had an opportunity to learn about the pilot results. It was the final community engagement activity of the Valley Connect project.

The 32 participants who supported taking a next step were then asked which of four options Town Council should prioritize:

- Strengthen: 13
- Open: 13
- Extend: 3
- Expand: 3

Five people completed a letter of support.

The results show support for moving forward, with participants favouring the two options that establish a practical foundation for future service: strengthening the existing Valley Bus and opening a fixed-route service to more people. These findings helped inform the recommendations presented later in this report.



91%

... of respondents said they would encourage the Town Council to take the next step toward public transportation in Drumheller

Exhibit (2026)

Findings and Results

Exhibit Activity

Part 1: Based on what you've learned about Valley Connect, would you encourage Town Council to take the next step toward public transportation in Drumheller?

YES

UNSURE

NO

Part 2: What should Town Council prioritize as the next step toward public transportation in Drumheller?

STRENGTHEN

Build on What We Have
Evaluate and refine the
existing Valley Bus service +
develop a multi-year
public transportation plan

Research - No / Low Cost

EXTEND

Service in the Summer

Provide a summer
Saturday fixed-route bus,
open to everyone

Service - Low Cost

OPEN

Service for Everyone

Provide a single weekday
fixed-route bus,
open to everyone

Service - Low Cost

EXPAND

Invest to Build a Service for Drumheller

Invest in and build a broader
municipal public
transportation service

Service - Investment/More Cost

Findings and Results

Marketing

The project used several marketing and promotion tactics. The route map and timetable appeared consistently across materials and were generally well received. Suggested improvements included adding a table-based schedule and making it clearer that FlixBus and Valley Connect shared the Downtown Plaza stop.

Tactic	Results
Social Media and Google Ads	89,898 impressions and 2,829 clicks Ads ran from June through August
Media Coverage	5 radio or television segments and 14 newspaper or online articles from May 5 to September 15 Additional local coverage in February 2026 about the open house and pilot funding
Google Maps Route	10,408 views Route published June 27; data retrieved September 6

Table: Results of select marketing tactics



Next Steps

TRAVEL DRUMHELLER

Valley Connect supported the local visitor economy, consistent with Travel Drumheller's role as a destination marketing and management organization.

Based on the pilot results, Travel Drumheller is exploring whether it could help bring the Valley Connect hop-on, hop-off shuttle back in summer 2027. Any future service should reflect the pilot findings and be clear on its purpose. There may also be opportunities to improve the visitor experience around the service, beyond transportation alone. Continued service would depend significantly on funding for operations and coordination.

TOWN OF DRUMHELLER

The Feasibility Study and the Valley Connect pilot both show interest in continued work on public transportation. A service open to everyone could help residents and visitors reach work, appointments, shopping, recreation and other destinations. It could also support community participation and local economic development.

The project has generated useful research, real-world operating experience and community interest. With the Valley Bus operating contract ending in April 2028, there is a timely opportunity for the Town and the Valley Bus Society to begin considering how the existing service and broader public transportation could evolve together

Four options have been developed, with each building on the previous one. They increase in service, impact and cost—from planning and improvements that may have little or no added cost to a broader municipal investment. This staged approach recognizes both community needs and the Town's fiscal constraints. At the September exhibit, the Strengthen and Open options received the greatest support.

Next Steps



Paths Forward

Expand

Invest to Build a Service for Drumheller

Develop a complete public transit system, informed by

- Scalable options shared in the Feasibility Study
- Government funding options
- Community demand

Extend

Service in the Summer

Provide a Saturday summer fixed route public transit service responding to seasonal demand

- Fare required
- Route to be defined
- Open to all

Open

Service for Everyone

Provide a fixed route public transit service, one weekday/week

- Fare required
- Route to be defined
- Open to all

Strengthen

Build on What We Have

Evaluate and refine the current Valley Bus service

- Additional data collection
- Explore governance options
- Consider service-delivery options

Develop a multi-year service plan for public transit

Foundation —————> *Investment over time* —————> **Expanded Service**

Next Steps

Strengthen

Valley Bus provides an important door-to-door service for seniors and people with disabilities. The Strengthen option would:

- Evaluate and refine Valley Bus
- Develop a multi-year public transportation plan

The Valley Bus review would expand data collection and analysis to better understand how the service is used, how well it meets clients' needs and where improvements may be possible. It would also consider the role Valley Bus could play within a broader public transportation system while continuing to meet its mandate.

This work would require cooperation among the Town, the Valley Bus Society and its contracted operator. The current operating contract ends in April 2028, providing time to consider potential service and governance changes before decisions about the next contract are required.

The multi-year plan would build on the Feasibility Study, pilot findings and Valley Bus review to identify practical steps for the next five years. The plan should address governance, funding, service options and how specialized and general public transportation could work together. It could support grant applications, inform economic development and planning decisions, and guide future municipal budgets.

The findings would also inform the Open and Extend options, including future routes, schedules and the roles of door-to-door and fixed-route services.

Next Steps

Open

The Open option would introduce a fixed-route service available to everyone one weekday a week. The route would focus on residents' needs by connecting neighbourhoods with everyday destinations. Its design should draw on the Feasibility Study, pilot findings and Valley Bus review. The review may also identify opportunities to reserve higher-cost door-to-door service for those who need it while serving some trips through the fixed route. A fare of \$3 each way is recommended.

Any new service should collect consistent data so that performance can be monitored and compared over time and with other communities.

Extend

The Extend option would add summer Saturday service that is open to everyone. It responds to the lack of Valley Bus service on weekends and to visitor demand during summer weekends.

Route design and data collection would be similar to the Open option. Planning should also consider any visitor-focused transportation operating at the time.

Expand

The Expand option includes several ways to scale up using the service recommended in the Feasibility Study. It would require the Town to make a significant commitment to establishing a broader public transportation system in the valley.

Some communities have chosen to invest in a full system quickly. About a decade ago, Whitecourt used available grants to launch its system with three buses providing public transit service for its whole community. That system continues to serve residents and visitors. Appendix I provides more information about Whitecourt's service.

Recommendation

Public transportation helps people take part in everyday life. It can connect people to work, groceries, health and personal services, recreation and community activities. Unlike specialized transportation, a public service is available to everyone.

Now is the time for Drumheller to take the next step. The community has technical analysis from the Feasibility Study, real operating experience from the Valley Connect pilot and evidence of community support. Valley Connect and FlixBus also created public awareness, demonstrated demand and built momentum for improving transportation options.

That momentum should not be lost.

We recommend that the Town of Drumheller action the next steps for public transportation and include them in its 2027 operating plans and budget, beginning with:

- **Strengthen: Build on What We Have**
- **Open: Provide Service to More People**



Appendix A

TRANSPORTATION IN DRUMHELLER

Valley Bus

Valley Bus is a municipally subsidized service that provides door-to-door transportation for seniors and people with disabilities. The Valley Bus Society (VBS) oversees the service.

This appendix provides an overview of Valley Bus based on publicly available information, including VBS minutes published in Town Council agenda packages.

The Valley Bus Society plans to provide Town Council with an update on its operations by the end of 2026.

Mission: “The Valley Bus Society is a non-profit organization created to ensure that accessible transportation is available for persons with disability and senior citizens. The operations shall be carried out primarily in Drumheller and District.”

Objects of the Society:

1. To promote the provision of transportation services for the mentally and physically challenged and seniors.
2. To receive money and funds by way of contributions, fund raising, donations, subscriptions, legacies, grants, or other lawful methods and to receive gifts of property of any description for the furthering of the object of the Society.
3. To promote the provision of low-cost transportation for seniors and the physically and mentally challenged.
4. To provide transportation services to individuals or groups if alternative transportation is not available.

Appendix A

Governance	The Valley Bus Society serves as the governing board for Valley Bus. Established in 1984, it is registered as both a society and a charity in Alberta. The Board includes: • Four executive members • Three directors at large Councillor Cheryl McNeil is the Town of Drumheller’s current appointee to the board. Society members pay an annual membership fee of \$5. The board meets quarterly and holds its Annual General Meeting in May. The board sets fares and approves and oversees the service contract. The current operating contract was awarded to Bubba T’s Bus Tours and Shuttle Service and runs until April 2028. The contractor provides the Society with a monthly report that includes total rides and revenue collected through cash, charges and punch cards. Valley Bus Society minutes are shared with Town Council and published online in accordance with the Town’s Committee Bylaw 34.25. Before 2023, the Society owned buses and directly managed the service.
Service	Valley Bus uses a dial-a-bus model, providing shared, door-to-door transportation within Drumheller and district. The service reported 10,250 rides in 2024. Service is available Monday to Friday, excluding statutory holidays, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Customers request a ride by telephone, with advance bookings given priority. Each customer receives a 10-minute pickup window. Trips may be shared with other passengers, depending on scheduling. The service also provides several recurring weekly trips from the Senior’s Lodges/Manors to local shopping.
Clients	Valley Bus serves two primary groups: • Seniors—approximately 34% of Drumheller’s population, or 2,300 people, were age 60 or older according to the 2021 Census • People with disabilities

Appendix A

Fares	The one-way fares are: • Drumheller (in town) \$7 • Nacmine, Midland, Rosedale \$10 • Wayne \$12 • East Coulee, Munson \$16 • Dalum \$21 • Morrin \$26 • Michichi \$26 • Dorothy and Rosebud \$31 • Delia \$46 Riders can pay by cash or punch card. A \$70 punch card covers 10 rides within Drumheller. The contracted operator retains the fare revenue.
Funding	The Valley Bus Society is subsidized by the Town of Drumheller. Most of the annual subsidy supports the service contract, while a smaller portion covers the Valley Bus Society's operating costs. For example, under the 2025–2027 budget presented to Town Council on November 12, 2024, the planned municipal subsidy for 2026 was \$95,627. Of this amount, \$89,671, excluding net GST, was allocated to the operating contract.
Fleet and Drivers	The contractor's core fleet consists of three accessible vehicles, driven by a roster of nine drivers. • One accessible shuttle bus with capacity for 20 passengers • Two accessible minivans equipped with ramps
Agenda Links	<u>Committee of the Whole - November 14, 2024</u> - includes 2024 meeting minutes and a delegation presenting a history and 2025-27 budget <u>Committee of the Whole – February 10, 2025</u> - meeting minutes <u>Council – April 7, 2026</u> - meeting minutes <u>Council – May 19, 2026</u> - meeting minutes The Town of Drumheller agenda packages, minutes and video recordings (YouTube) are available on the Town's website https://www.drumheller.ca/your-municipality/mayor-council/meeting-agendas-minutes

Appendix A

Other Drumheller Transportation

There are other organizations in the community that have their own vehicles or contracted services to support the specific transportation needs of their clients.

- A local non-profit, DARTS (Drumheller and Region Transition Society), provides services for persons with special needs. It uses Valley Bus and its own vehicles to meet clients' transportation needs. Its fleet includes two wheelchair-accessible vans, one standard minivan, and one compact crossover. Wheelchair-accessible transportation is particularly important for some clients.
- The Drumheller Health Centre uses a contracted service to provide non-ambulatory medical transportation within Drumheller and to larger centres such as Calgary and Red Deer.

Several small private operators also provide tours and shuttle services for purchase within the valley and to destinations outside Drumheller. Available services, vehicles and destinations vary by operator.

Appendix B

FLIX BUS

FlixBus provided seasonal service between Calgary and Drumheller from May 14 to September 13, 2026.

Calgary stops included:

- Calgary International Airport (YYC), Door 14, Bay 31
- Whitehorn LRT Station
- Downtown Calgary, 11 Avenue SE

Drumheller stops included:

- Downtown Plaza
- Royal Tyrrell Museum (except during days Valley Connect operated)

The coordinated schedule between FlixBus and Valley Connect enabled visitors to explore more of the valley. Day trip and overnight trips from Calgary were possible with the FlixBus schedule.

FLIX BUS RESULTS - FROM FLIXBUS

Season Summary – Key Findings

- Total ridership: 1,900 passengers this summer, averaging 28 PAX/day
- Top boarding point: Calgary Downtown; Drumheller Downtown outperformed the Museum stop
- Customer profile: Predominantly day-trippers, traveling in groups and families

Financial Performance

- Break-even load: 19 PAX/trip would be required to break even for FlixBus

Demand by Day

- Peak day: Saturday (approximately double Friday and Sunday)
- Friday, Sunday, and Wednesday perform similarly

Appendix B

FLIX BUS RESULTS CONTINUED

Drumheller draws over half a million visitors a year – yet until recently, getting there without a car was nearly impossible. That gap wasn't just an inconvenience; it was a ceiling on what the Valley could achieve as a tourism destination. Travellers flying into Calgary, residents without vehicles, and spontaneous weekend visitors were effectively excluded from one of Alberta's most extraordinary landscapes.

FlixBus launched direct service between Calgary and Drumheller in May 2026, connecting the airport, downtown, and the Whitehorn LRT station straight to the Downtown Plaza and the Royal Tyrrell Museum – with fares starting under \$25. By linking Drumheller into Calgary's broader transit network, we were not just moving people; we were extending the reach of every local business, hotel, and attraction in the Valley.

That said, the 2026 trial has demonstrated that building ridership on a new route takes time. Initiatives like ValleyConnect – the free hop-on/hop-off shuttle connecting the Museum, the Hoodoos, and downtown – play a crucial role in making the full visitor experience viable without a car, and continued investment in services like these will be key to driving longer-term adoption of the FlixBus route. Awareness is still growing, and converting potential travellers into regular passengers requires sustained marketing and community outreach efforts. As a result, extending service into 2027 will likely require subsidy support from local and provincial partners to bridge the gap while demand matures.

Appendix B



Bus Schedule

flixbus.ca

Tickets start @ \$22. Online only.

May, June and September: Friday to Monday (4 days/week)

Schedule runs May 14 to June 21 and August 31 to September 13, 2026

July and August: Wednesday to Monday (6 days/week)

Schedule runs June 22 to August 30, 2026

CALGARY DEPARTURES

Downtown 11 Ave SE	Whitehorn	YYC Door 14, Bay 31	Downtown Plaza	Royal Tyrrell Museum*
7:50 am	8:15 am	n/a	9:45 am	10:00 am
2:40 pm	3:05 pm	3:30 pm	5:00 pm	5:15 pm

*no service to the RTM Fri/Sat in the summer when Valley Connect is operating

DRUMHELLER DEPARTURES**

Royal Tyrrell Museum*	Downtown Plaza	YYC Door 14, Bay 31	Whitehorn	Downtown 11 Ave SE
10:30 am	10:45 am	12:15 pm	12:35 pm	1:00 pm
5:45 pm	6:00 pm	7:30 pm	7:50 pm	8:15 pm

*no service to the RTM Fri/Sat in the summer when Valley Connect is operating

** PM bus depart/arrival shift by 0.5 hour earlier in September, as RTM closes at 5 pm. RTM not open Mondays in September.

*** schedule subject to change by FlixBus. Current as of 13 May 2026.

Appendix C

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND MARKETING

Throughout the project a range of tactics were used to reach out to the community for input, build awareness of the project and promote the bus service. This appendix provides more details on the tactics used.

Participation/Attendance at Community Events

- East Coulee and Nacmine pancake breakfasts
- Seniors Week breakfast and Seniors Fair
- I Love Drumheller Valley Day
- Recreation, Arts and Wellness Exhibit
- Summer at the Plaza

Meetings with Local Organizations

- Community Business Association
- Community Futures Big Country
- Drumheller and District Chamber of Commerce
- Interagency Meeting
- Pioneer Trail Senior Centre
- Rotary Club of Drumheller
- Royal Tyrrell Museum
- Town of Drumheller staff meetings and Council meetings (see list below)
- Travel Drumheller partners



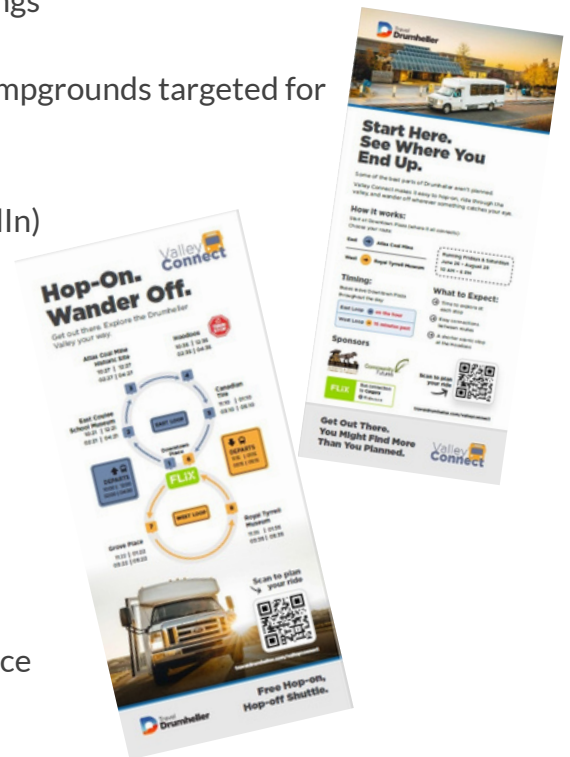
Photo: Booth at Summer at the Plaza

Date	Meeting Type	Presentation Topic
Jun 16, 2025	Council	Project overview, including the purpose and planned work
Jan 13, 2026	Committee of the Whole	Project update, including 2025 community outreach and an invitation to the February 25 open house; first presentation to the Council elected in October 2025
Jun 9, 2026	Committee of the Whole	Feasibility Study results and Recommended Option 3, plus an update on the summer shuttle pilot
Oct 6, 2026	Council	Final report, shuttle pilot results and recommended next steps for public transportation in Drumheller

Appendix C

Promotion of the Project and Bus Service

- Posters and brochures for Valley Connect
 - Located across the community, including community bulletin boards at Freson Bros., Riverside Pharmacy, Shoppers Drug Mart, Café Olé, Black Mountain Roasters, the Badlands Community Facility, Aquaplex, Memorial Arena, Drumheller Public Library
 - On hand to distribute at community events and meetings
 - Available to any interested person to share
 - Hand delivered by Travel Drumheller to hotels and campgrounds targeted for ridership, and a number of downtown businesses.
- Social media:
 - Travel Drumheller posts (Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn)
 - Posts by stop hosts and local supporters
 - Paid Meta advertising
 - Influencer coverage supported by Travel Alberta
- Paid advertisements on:
 - local radio BOOM 99.5
 - local newspaper
 - Google paid ads
 - Napier movie theatre
- Online:
 - A dedicated webpage for the Valley Connect bus service <https://traveldrumheller.com/valleyconnect/>
 - Stop locations published on [Google Maps](#)
 - Valley Connect information added to local attraction websites (ie. how to get here)
- Presentation to Tourism Calgary's downtown ambassadors
- Media releases and ribbon cutting
- Bus stop signs including the complete route/timetable and were provided at stops, mostly using A-Frames



Photos (left to right): Ribbon cutting, Bus stop sign at Grove Place, Valley Connect webpage

Appendix D

VALLEY CONNECT - SERVICE FAQs

— How much does it cost?

It's free.

Hop on, hop off, and explore the valley your way.

— How does it work?

ValleyConnect is a fixed-route, hop-on, hop-off shuttle bus.

Start at Downtown Plaza or any designated stop. Ride east or west, get off wherever you like, and catch the next bus when you're ready to keep going.

— Where does it go?

Two routes connect some of Drumheller's most popular stops:

- **East Loop** → Atlas Coal Mine
- **West Loop** → Royal Tyrrel Museum

Check the map for all stops along the way.

— When does it run?

Fridays & Saturdays | June 26–August 29 10 AM–6 PM

The bus leaves the Downtown Plaza alternating throughout the day:

- **East Loop** → on the hour
- **West Loop** → :15 past

— Do I need to book ahead?

No booking needed.

Just show up at a stop and hop on.

Appendix D

— How often do buses come?

Each loop runs regularly throughout the day, with departures from Downtown Plaza alternating on the hour (East) and 15 minutes past (West).

If you hop off, another bus will be along to pick you up.

— Can I bring a stroller or small items?

Yes—strollers and small personal items are welcome.

Space can be limited, so foldable strollers are recommended when possible.

— Can I bring luggage?

This service is designed for exploring the valley.

Small bags are fine, but large luggage may not fit—pack light and wander more.

— Is the shuttle accessible?

Yes. Valley Connect is accessible for riders with mobility needs.

Check ahead as not all attractions or locations are accessible. If you have specific accessibility questions, speak with the driver when you arrive.

— Are pets allowed?

Only service animals are permitted on board.

— Can I learn more about ValleyConnect?

ValleyConnect is part of a project exploring the future of transportation in Drumheller, including this shuttle service pilot and a broader feasibility study.

You can help support what comes next—ride the bus, share your experience, and show your support for future bus service in the valley.

Learn more: www.traveldrumheller.com/destination-drumheller

Appendix I

DRIVER COLLECTED DATA

As a pilot the collection of operational was important and served to provide us more information on the service. Drivers manually recorded on a paper during the service:

- departure time
- riders on/off at each stop, including those who utilized the 'stop over' at the hoodoos
- assumed rider age category (youth, adult, senior) and if the rider was a local
- arrivals from the AM FlixBus at the Downtown Plaza
- comments

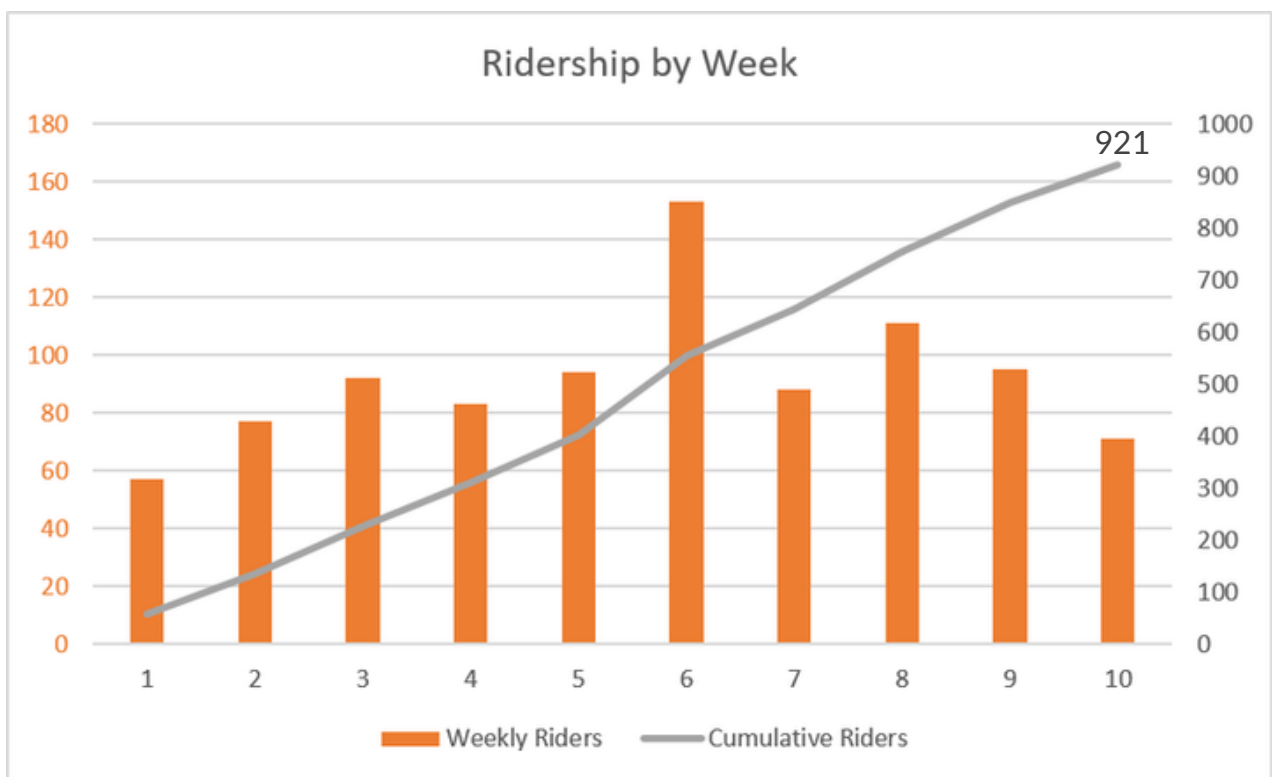
The data was inputted into a excel sheet for analysis, which are shared in this appendix. The rider demographics (age and local) are not directly shared, as the self-reported responses in the riders survey are seen as more accurate.

The results are one tool that should be used alongside others to help inform decisions. The results reflect a snapshot in time.

Appendix I

RIDERSHIP

In total **921 rides** were provided on Valley Connect over the 20 days of service. This is an average of 46 riders per service day, and 11.5 boardings per run. Ridership was meaningful, and sustained, with the peak on the August long weekend (Week 6).



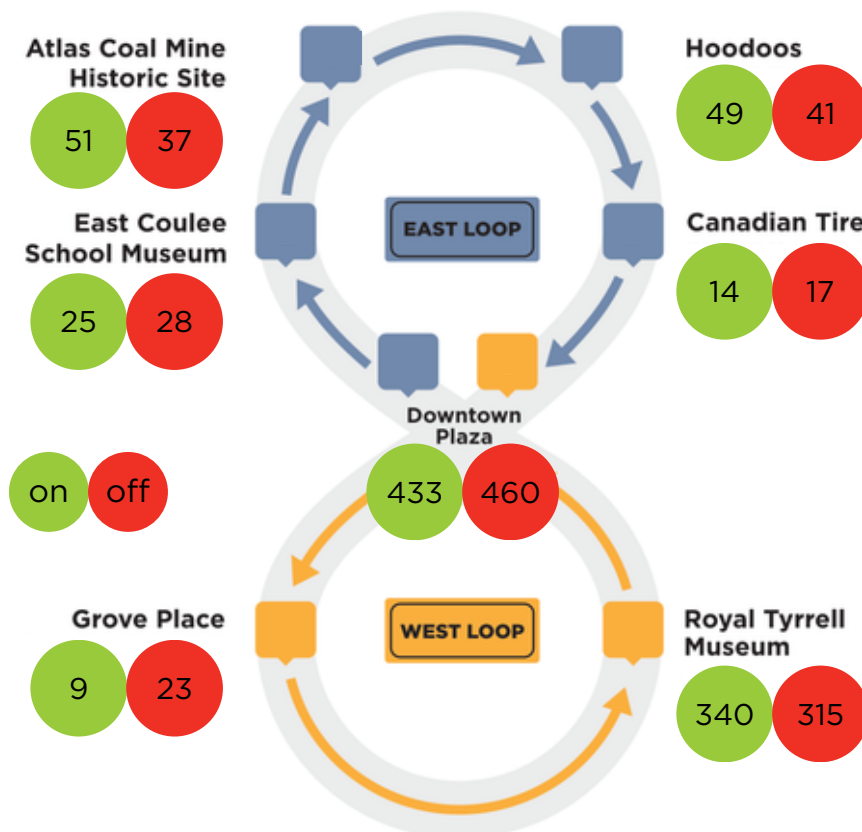
Saturdays substantially outperformed Fridays, accounting for 598 boardings (65%) compared to 323 (35%). The average daily ridership on Saturdays was roughly 60, compared to 32 on Fridays.

Appendix I

WHERE PEOPLE WENT

Together the Downtown Plaza (47%) and Royal Tyrrell Museum (37%) account for 84% of boardings (get on).

Considering the driver identified locals, the main locations locals boarded were the Downtown Plaza (39), East Coulee School Museum (15), Atlas Coal Mine (4) and Royal Tyrrell Museum (3).



More riders boarded on the West Loop (496, 54%) than the East Loop (425, 46%).

The 'stop over' at the Hoodoos was used 300 times.

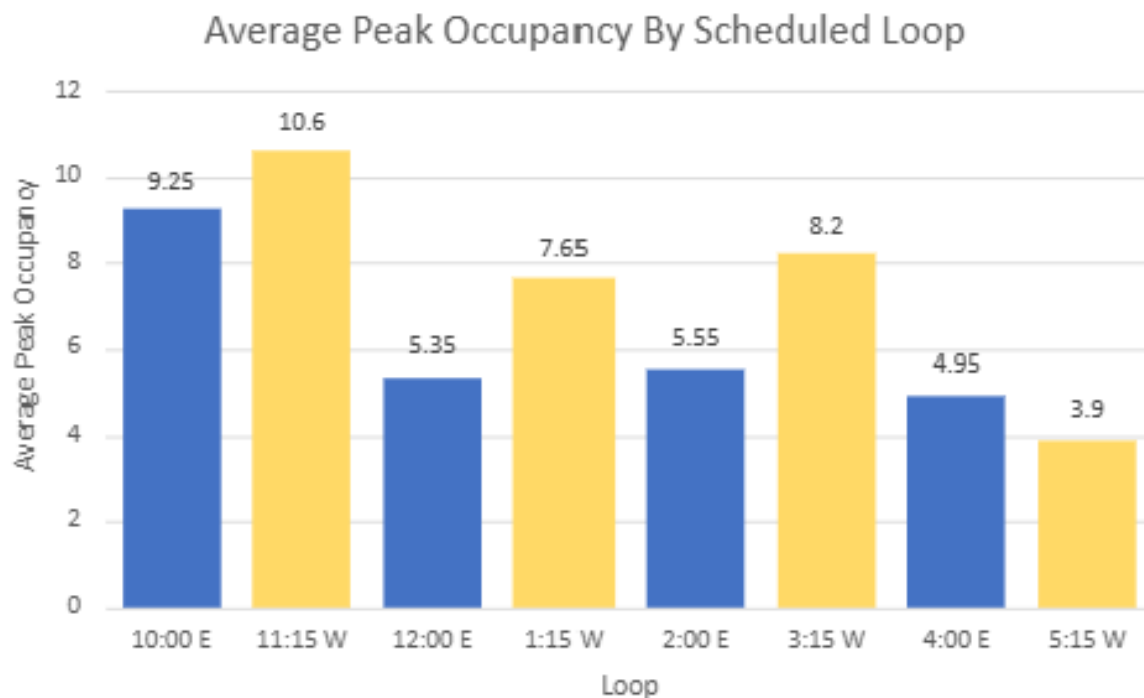
Appendix I

ROUTE ANALYSIS

Demand was strongest earlier in the day. The first two loops have the highest average peak occupancies, particularly on Saturdays.

Demand declined toward the end of the day. The 5:15pm West Loop had the lowest average peak occupancy on both Friday and Saturday, and was the most likely loop to operate without passengers.

Saturday consistently experience stronger demand. Average peak occupancy whas higher on Saturday for every scheduled loop.



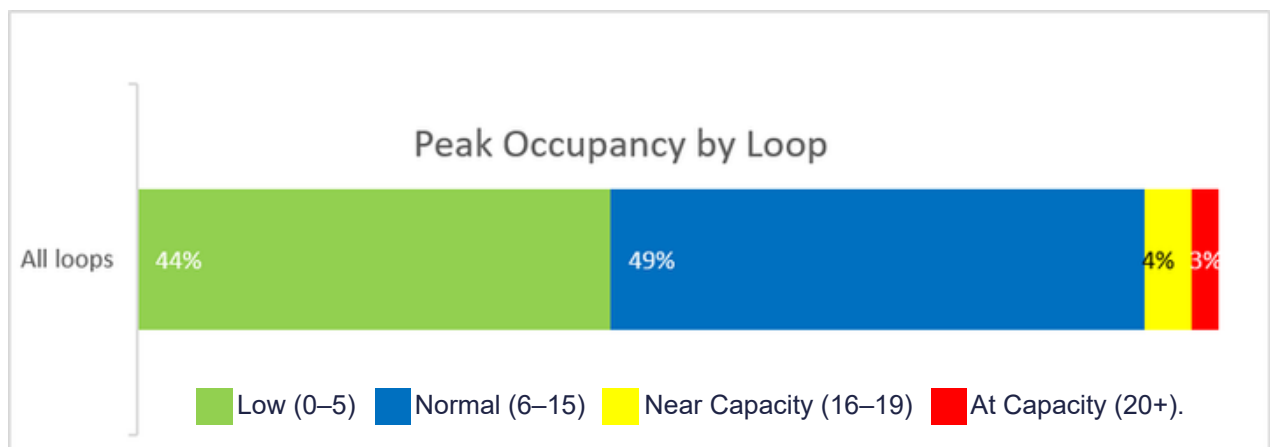
Appendix I

CAPACITY

During the service, the shuttle bus was generally not overcrowded, but capacity constraints did occur.

The near/at capacity (7% of loops) typically occurred on the West Loop, reinforcing the importance of the connection between the Downtown Plaza and Royal Tyrrell Museum. On one occurrence people were left at the Downtown Plaza stop, as the bus was full.

Of the 44% (70) low capacity loops, 14% (10) of them were empty (ie. 0 riders). The empty loops included 8 on Fridays, 2 on Saturdays.



A loop refers to either the West or East Loop. The bus took 4 routes/day, each made of 2 loops, thus 8 loops/day. A loop is made of multiple segments, with capacity measured by the highest occupancy segment of the loop. (n=160)

Appendix F

RIDER SURVEYS

As a pilot the collection of data from the riders was important and served to provide us more information on people's journeys.

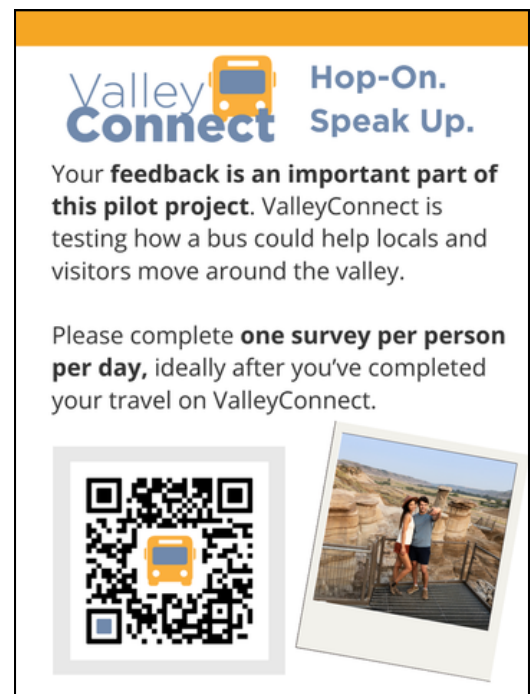
All riders were encouraged to fill out the rider survey (ie. Speak Up!). They had the option of hard copies, available on the bus or online, accessed through the QR code. The drivers actively encouraged the surveys, and QR code slips were available.

In total 104 people replied to the survey. About half the responses were provided online, and half by hardcopy. Of those, 47 opted into receiving a follow up survey (ie. Say More!). Twenty four people completed the follow up survey. Unedited open ended responses are shared in Appendix F.

The survey results are one tool that should be used alongside others to help inform decisions. The results reflect a snapshot in time and a portion of the riders.

When exploring the survey results be aware that the number of responses to any question may vary because:

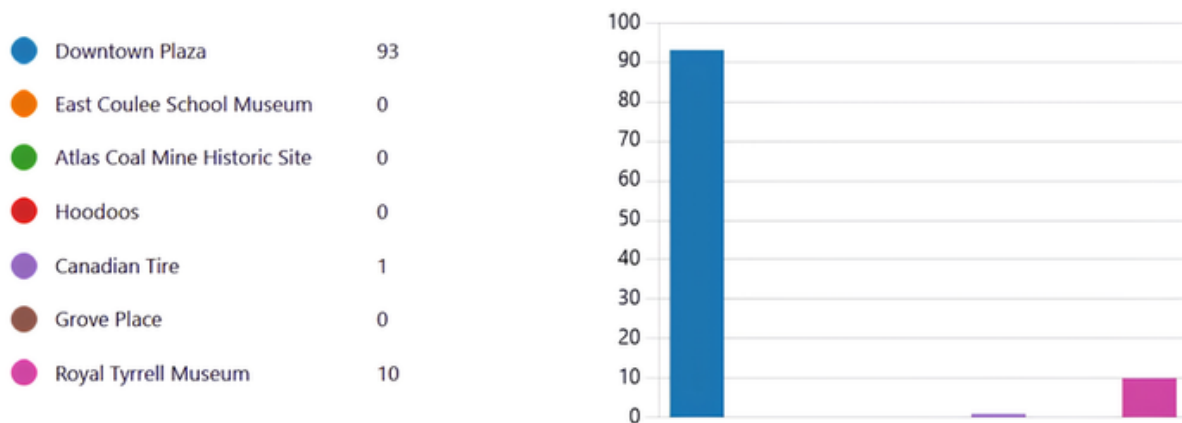
- the application of mandatory and options questions is enforced online, but not hardcopies.
- not everyone who completed a hard copy survey choose to flip the page and complete both sides



Appendix F

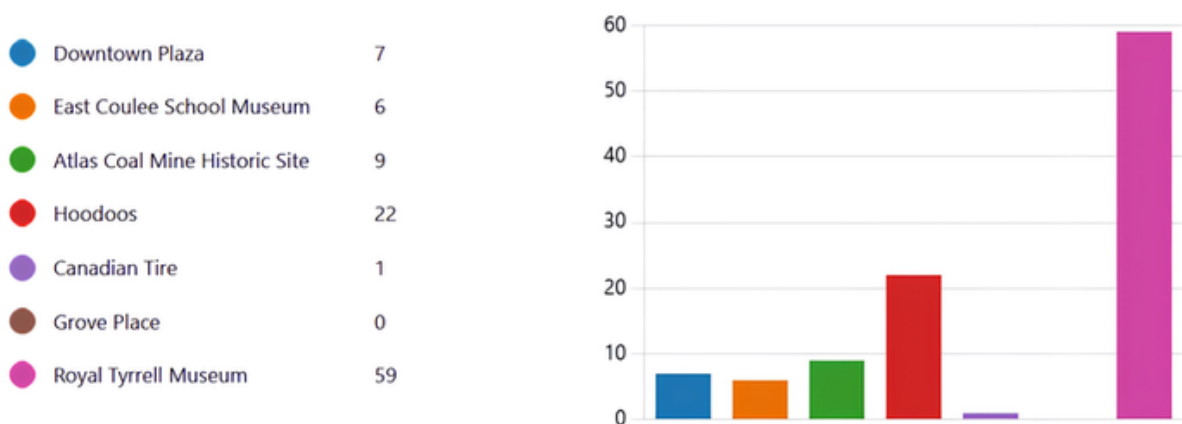
RIDER SURVEY PART 1 - SPEAK UP!

Q1. WHERE DID YOU FIRST BOARD THE VALLEY CONNECT BUS TODAY?



Boarding location: Most respondents (89%) first boarded Valley Connect at Downtown Plaza, while 10% boarded at the Royal Tyrrell Museum (n=104).

Q2. WHAT STOP WAS YOUR PRIMARY DESTINATION TODAY?



Primary destination: The Royal Tyrrell Museum was the most popular destination, selected by 57% of respondents, followed by the Hoodoos at 21% (n=104).

Appendix F

Q3. WHICH BEST DESCRIBES YOU TODAY?

local Drumheller Valley resident	13
overnight visitor	20
day trip visitor	69
working in the Drumheller Valley	0
Other	2



Visitor type: Local Drumheller Valley residents made up 13% of the respondents. Most respondents were day-trip visitors (66%) (n=104).

Q4. DID YOU USE VALLEY CONNECT FOR A ROUND TRIP TODAY?

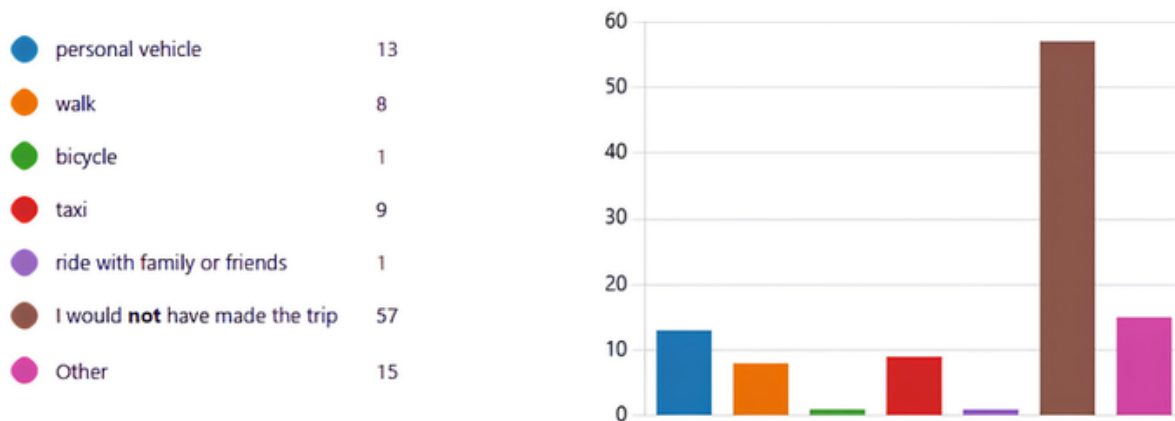
Yes	97
No	7



Round-trip use: 93% of respondents used Valley Connect for a round trip (n=104).

Appendix F

Q5. IF VALLEY CONNECT HAD NOT BEEN AVAILABLE TODAY, HOW WOULD YOU HAVE MADE THIS TRIP?



Alternative transportation: More than half of respondents (55%) said they would not have made the trip without Valley Connect. Others would have used a personal vehicle, taxi, walked, cycled, or travelled with family or friends (n=104).

Q6A. DID VALLEY CONNECT HELP YOU VISIT A LOCATION THAT YOU OTHERWISE WOULD NOT HAVE VISITED TODAY?



Encouraging additional visits: Valley Connect helped 82% of respondents visit a location they otherwise would not have visited that day (n=104).

Appendix F

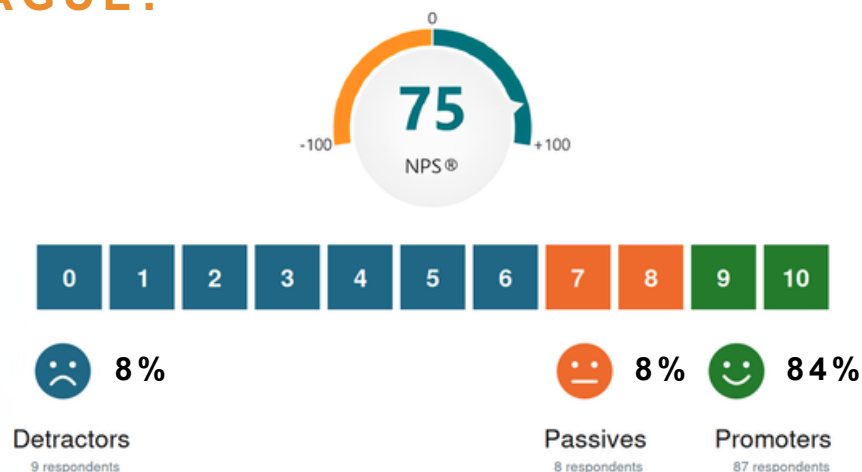
Q6B. WHICH LOCATION?

- Hoodoos 52%
- Royal Tyrrell Museum 23%
- All of Drumheller Valley 15%
- Atlas Coal Museum 11%
- East Coulee School Museum 9%
- Other 3%



Additional locations visited: Of the 81 respondents who identified a location they otherwise would not have visited, 52% mentioned the Hoodoos. Respondents could identify more than one location (81 respondents / 93 locations identified).

Q7. HOW LIKELY ARE YOU TO RECOMMEND THE VALLEY CONNECT BUS TO A FRIEND OR COLLEAGUE?



Likelihood of recommending: Valley Connect received strong support, with 84% of respondents classified as promoters, thus Valley Connect achieved a high Net Promoter Score of 75 (n=104).

The Net Promoter Score (NPS) is a common measure of customer satisfaction. The higher the score the more likely respondents will generate positive word-of-mouth and referrals. The score is calculated by subtracting the percent of Detractors (scores 0-6) from the overall percent of Promoters (scores 9 and 10). The NPS is 75 (84 % Promoters - 9% of Detractors).

Appendix F

Q8. WHAT WORKED WELL, OR WHAT CAN BE IMPROVED?



What worked well

- Friendly and helpful drivers
- A positive overall experience
- Convenient stops and timing



Opportunities to improve

- Increase service frequency, from 2 hours to hourly
- Expand operating days and hours
- Add more stops and improve route and schedule coordination

What worked well or could improve: Respondents frequently praised the service and friendly drivers, with 25% using the word “great” in their feedback. Suggestions for improvement included more frequent service and stops (n=99).

All of the open ended feedback responses from both Part 1 and 2 of the rider surveys are provided in Appendix F. The unedited responses have been sorted into categories for ease of review.

Q9. PROVIDE YOUR EMAIL IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO TAKE AN ADDITIONAL SURVEY TO HELP US LEARN MORE

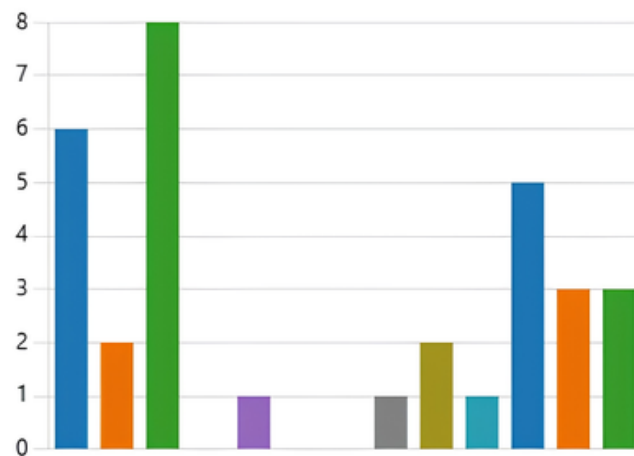
Follow up survey: 47 of the 104 respondents (45%) provided their email for the opportunity to complete the follow up survey.

Appendix F

RIDER SURVEY PART 2 - SAY MORE!

Q1. HOW DID YOU FIRST HEAR ABOUT VALLEY CONNECT?

Google search	6
Social media (Facebook, Instagram, etc)	2
Travel Drumheller website	8
Local e-newsletter	0
Newspaper article	1
Newspaper ad	0
Radio	0
Travel Drumheller presentation / out in community	1
Poster or sign or brochure	2
A hotel, campground or attraction	1
Friends or family (word of mouth)	5
Saw the bus driving around	3
Other	3



Awareness: The Travel Drumheller website was the most common way respondents heard about Valley Connect, selected by 33%, followed by Google searches at 25% and word of mouth at 21% (n=24).

Q2. WHICH BEST DESCRIBES YOU?

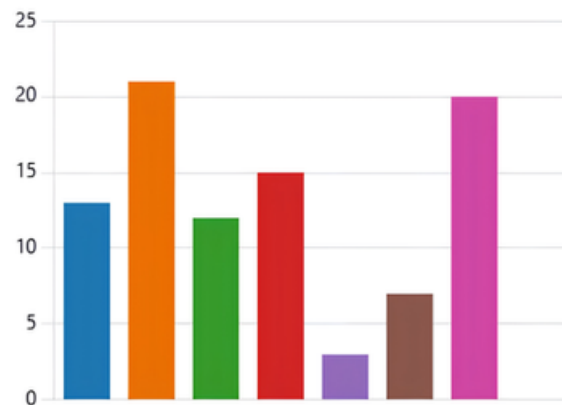
local Drumheller Valley resident	3
overnight visitor	8
day trip visitor	13
working in the Drumheller Valley	0
Other	0



Respondent type: Most respondents were visitors, including 54% who were visiting for the day and 33% who were staying overnight. Local residents represented 13% of respondents (n=24). This is a similar ratio to the same question in Part 1, with a higher portion of overnight visitors responding in Part 2.

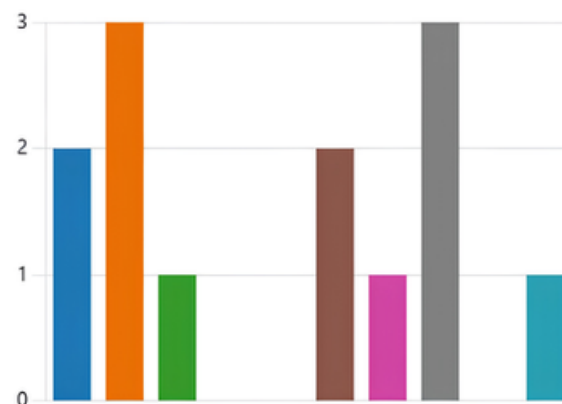
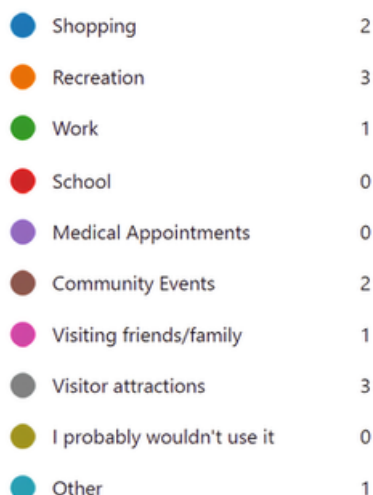
Appendix F

Q3. BECAUSE VALLEY CONNECT WAS AVAILABLE...



Impact on visits: Valley Connect helped 88% of respondents visit more attractions and made the trip less stressful for 83%. It encouraged 63% to spend more money locally, 54% to spend more time in Drumheller and 50% to visit more businesses. Respondents could identify more than one reason (24 respondents / 93 identified).

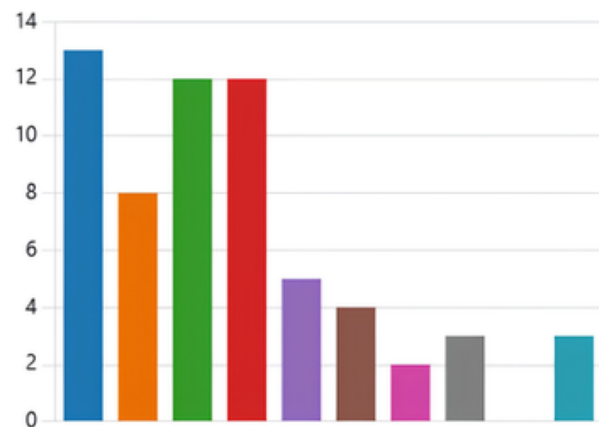
Q4. IF VALLEY CONNECT BECAME A REGULAR SERVICE, HOW WOULD YOU EXPECT TO USE IT?



Potential future use: Recreation and visitor attractions were the most frequently selected potential uses of a permanent Valley Connect service. No respondents indicated that they probably would not use the service (n=13).

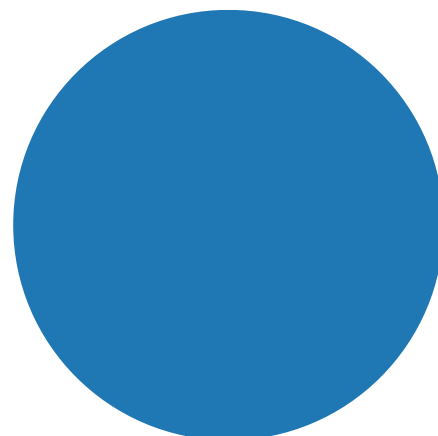
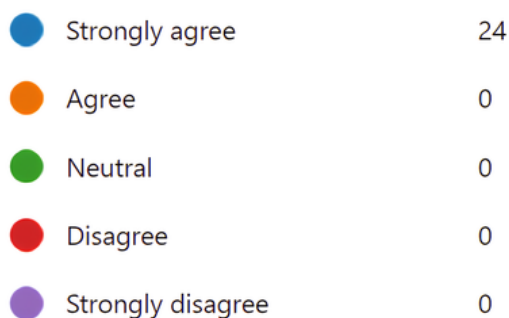
Appendix F

Q5. IF VALLEY CONNECT CONTINUES, WHICH IMPROVMENTS WOULD BE MOST IMPORTANT?



Priority improvements: More operating days was selected by 54% of respondents. More frequent buses and additional stops were each selected by 50%, followed by longer operating hours at 33%. Respondents could identify more than one improvement (24 respondents / 62 identified).

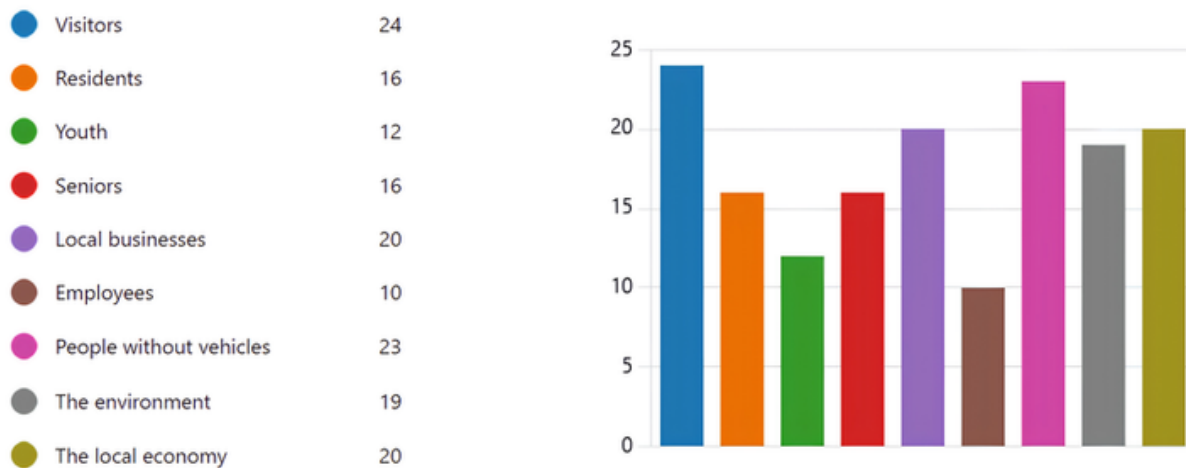
Q6. TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE? VALLEY CONNECT SHOULD CONTINUE BEYOND THIS PILOT?



Support for continuation: All 24 respondents strongly agreed that Valley Connect should continue beyond the pilot (n=24).

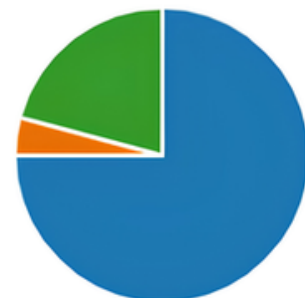
Appendix F

Q7. WHO DO YOU THINK BENEFITS FROM A SERVICE LIKE VALLEY CONNECT?



Who benefits: All respondents believed visitors benefit from Valley Connect, while 96% identified people without vehicles. Local businesses and the local economy were each selected by 83%, and 79% recognized environmental benefits. Respondents could identify more than one benefiter (24 respondents / 106 identified).

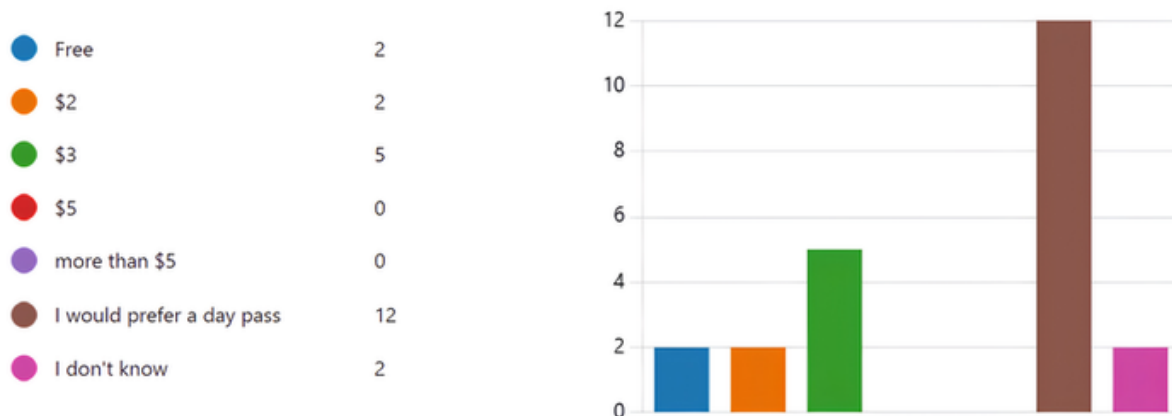
Q8. WOULD YOU STILL USE VALLEY CONNECT IF THERE WAS A FARE?



Willingness to pay a fare: Three-quarters of respondents said they would continue using Valley Connect if there were a fare. Only one respondent said they would not (n=24).

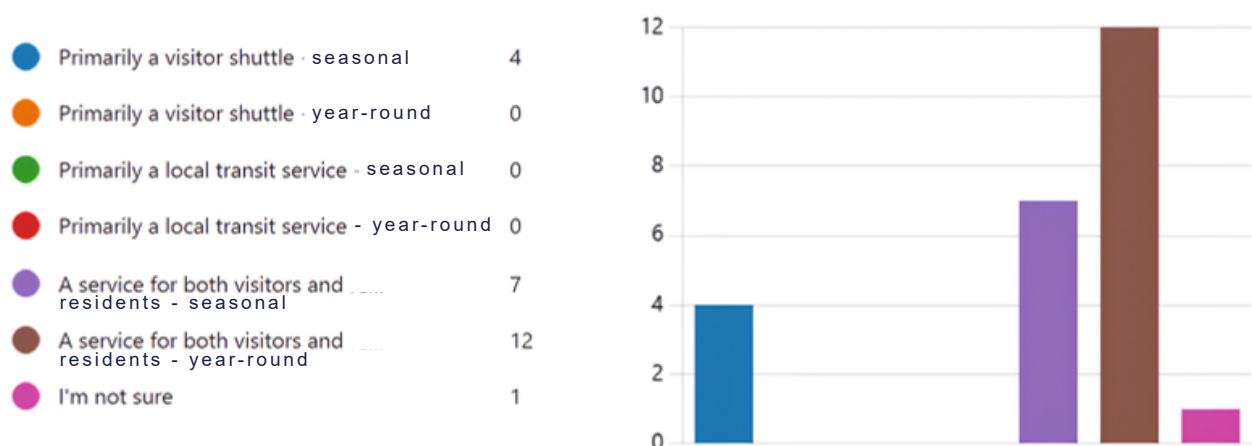
Appendix F

Q9. IF VALLEY CONNECT BECAME A PERMANENT SERVICE, WHAT FARE WOULD YOU CONSIDER REASONABLE FOR A ONE-WAY TRIP?



Reasonable fare: A day pass was the preferred fare option, selected by 12 of the 23 respondents who answered the question. A \$3 one-way fare was the next most popular choice, while no respondents selected \$5 or more (n=23).

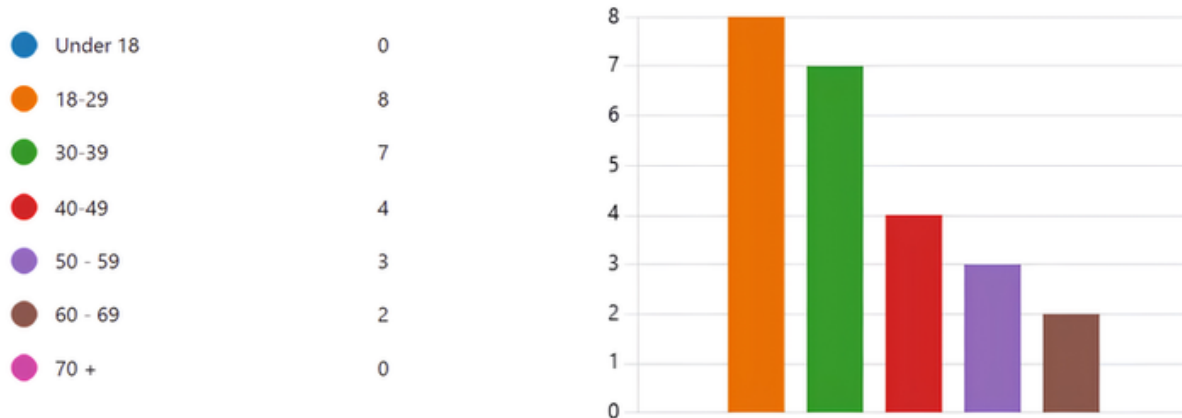
Q10. THINK BEYOND YOUR OWN TRIP, WHAT ROLE DO YOU THINK VALLEY CONNECT SHOULD PLAY IN THE FUTURE OF THE DRUMHELLER VALLEY?



Future role: Most respondents—79%—believed Valley Connect should serve both visitors and residents, with half favouring year-round service. An additional 17% preferred a seasonal visitor shuttle, while one respondent was unsure (n=24).

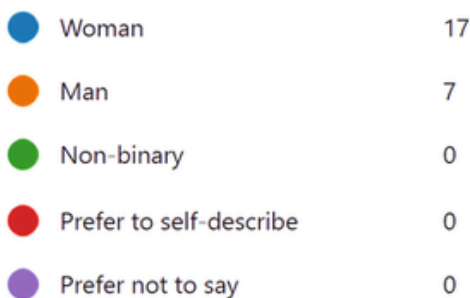
Appendix F

Q11. WHAT IS YOUR AGE?



Age: Respondents represented a range of ages, the largest groups being ages 18–29 at 33% and ages 30–39 at 29% (n=24).

Q12. WHAT IS YOUR GENDER?



Gender: Of the 24 respondents, 71% identified as women and 29% identified as men. No respondents selected another gender option or preferred not to answer (n=24).

Q13. IS THERE ANY ELSE YOU'D LIKE US TO KNOW ABOUT VALLEY CONNECT OR TRANSPORTATION IN THE DRUMHELLER VALLEY?

Feedback: 11 respondents choose to provide written comments. All of the open ended feedback responses from both Part 1 and 2 of the rider surveys are provided in Appendix F. The unedited responses have been sorted into categories for ease of review.

Appendix G

RIDER SURVEY COMMENTS

Both Part 1 (Q8) and 2 (Q13) of the rider surveys included an open response question looking for feedback on the service. All unedited comments are shared here, sorted under the category that best reflects its primary theme.

SERVICE EXPERIENCE, DRIVERS AND RELIABILITY

- 1.The driver was really nice! :) and it was perfectly on time
- 2.Everything went so smoothly and very well organized
- 3.We had a wonderful trip, and our visit became even more memorable because of Valley Connect. Our driver was incredibly patient and kept everyone informed throughout the journey. He was an awesome guy! Thank you for providing us with a free ride. We truly appreciate it.
- 4.Amazing Driver
- 5.Leaving on time.
- 6.Stops are on time.
- 7.I searched online once I realized we wouldn't have a vehicle. The search worked great! Everything I needed to know was there. It was on time, clean, friendly drivers. 5 stars!
- 8.Bubba was great, as a chauffer and a quick guide to the badlands!
- 9.Drive was a local, extremely knowledgeable and made the experience even better. Bus service made an extremely difficult trek into a breezy ride.
- 10.IT IS PERFECT
- 11.Had a great driver
- 12.I was able to plan my day around the schedule
- 13.Nice bus and enjoyed relaxing rather than driving and parking.
- 14.I had guests and took them on the East loop to see the valley and check out the hoodoos on a hot day. It was lovely to meet other travellers.
- 15.Everything was great - it was much appreciated to have something easy that my mom and I could use during our trip. Having it available on Saturdays for day trip goers is fantastic!
- 16.It was on time clean and the driver was very friendly and helpful
- 17.Great driver providing facts about the locations. Buses always on time.
- 18.Love that we didn't need to do our own navigation. Easy to use, friendly drivers.
- 19.Friendly driver and informed about the valley
- 20.All worked out just fine
- 21.Tom was amazing lots of stories and told us all about the spots to visit, including future stays. Will definitely visit again and recommend this to others. Thanks Tom and everyone!
- 22.Very nice driver. A nice addition to have in the valley!
- 23.Service was super, the driver provided plenty of information and was in a good mood :-). Thank you very much and all the best!
- 24.Easy to get on, friendly drivers
- 25.Easy simple clean free. Close to our hotel. 15 minute break
- 26.No cost. Close to our hotel
- 27.It was great not to drive. Enjoyed the views. Great signage and info.
 Speed limit oh highway was 90km/hour.
- 28.Time pickup/works well. zero complaints :) Thank you.
- 29.Timing (2hours) works well. Great welcome/friendliness of the staff. Great service. What happens if the bus is full??
- 30.Excellent Service
- 31.I enjoyed the ride on the bus as the driver was friendly and informative

Appendix G

ACCESSIBILITY, AFFORDABILITY AND VISITOR IMPACT

1. The bus driver was extremely friendly and even let us know when we had to head back to the bus. The bus was also always right on time and connects the museum and the hodoos, which we wouldn't have been able to see, as we had no rented car. It is also more environmental friendly
2. It was good that we don't need to use taxi everywhere, but if there will be more stops for example to horse thief canon or suspension bridge, it make me stay longer in Drumheller.
3. Able to see things and decide if we want to go back to visit
4. Slightly earlier Morning Shuttle would mean we could have got to the museum without using a taxi. We booked for 10am. Great bus/service to enable people without transport to see the area.
5. Good service to get to attractions that are otherwise difficult to access without a car. Run more days of the week.
6. Without this service we would have only been able to pay a cab to take us to Tyrell. This way we walked the town seen ALL the amazing dinosaurs hanging around and visit all the local shops
7. I really appreciated the valley knowledge that the driver shared with us! I spent the first 17 years of my life in the valley and a couple more in adulthood and I hadn't been aware that there were multiple coal mines, or about the composition of the valley hills layers, until today's ride! I'd love to see this shuttle continue in future years as my family and I would definitely use it every summer.
8. Thank you for offering this service. We got to explore downtown Drumheller, which we'd never dine before. We had a great day and couldn't have done it without your service
9. Such a brilliant idea, made seeing Tyrell accessible and affordable for our group.
10. In a motorhome it would be difficult to visit the local sites. This was a fantastic and much appreciated service.
11. I absolutely love this service! Many folks like my wife and I would not be able to visit Drumheller and get around without it. The drivers too, were very friendly and informative. My only, tiny, criticism, since that's what this box is for, is that once every two hours and only two days a week could be improved although I fully understand it's easier for customers to say than for you guys to do. Thank you for the opportunity to visit this beautiful, unique place!
12. I don't drive, so the **Flix Bus** Connection and the Valley shuttle were the only way we could visit Drumheller. If the service is available next year we would come to visit for a full weekend.
13. Made it possible for us to drop by multiple locations for our Drumheller trip - we got to see more than originally planned and purchased from local businesses at every stop. Local driver was great thank you.
14. Perhaps explore bidirectional stops along the route so that I could take the bus to Canadian Tire/Walmart without having to do the full loop. Overall, Valley Connect really compelled me to visit Drumheller as a car-free visitor from Calgary and continuing the service would attract me back. Also the driver was really nice, the one who's wife was lawnmowing. Thank you!
15. The driver was super friendly during our time on Valley Connect and it was a really positive experience. Me and my friends really enjoyed our time there, especially as we couldn't rent a car — the shuttle helped us see the best of Drumheller! I think the next step would be to increase awareness of this as an option for tourists, because a lot of my other Calgary friends were not aware!
16. Valley Connect saved my day trip to Drumheller with my mom. We didn't have a rented car and when we actually were stuck at the museum, no taxis were able to pick us up. The bus was a life saver

Appendix G

SERVICE FREQUENCY, OPERATING HOURS AND CAPACITY

1. Clear schedules and the fact that it is free is super helpful! I'm curious if you'll have more frequent busses during high season.
2. Loved that it was right by the **FlixBus** stop. Would be great to expand to larger buses for the summer months, as even in June this bus was packed.
3. would love for any sort of expansions, more frequent trips in peak seasons, etc!!!! free regional transit is awesome so this is a super great pilot!
4. It was great!! So happy to be able to use it. The driver was very friendly and well informed, the shuttle was always on time. It might be nice if it ran more often though. Overall just glad about this free service!! Thank you!!
5. Hello. I used your service on Saturday, July 4th. I believe there was only one bus driver that day, but just in case, I wanted to leave a comment to express my gratitude to the driver who operated the bus departing downtown at 10:00 AM. His service was absolutely wonderful. He was talking to everyone in a friendly manner and voluntarily explaining the local highlights. It was incredibly helpful information for a tourist like me who didn't know much about the area, and thanks to him, I was able to have a very enjoyable day. I believe it is currently still in a trial run, but if the number of buses increases and more drop-off locations are added in the future, I would definitely love to visit Drumheller again. Thank you so very much!
6. The bus is the best thing to happen to the town all century! The only thing to add is more stops and later times. I LOVE THE BUS
7. More buses! More stops! More times! Otherwise perfect.
8. The driver is really thoughtful and informative. I wish there's be more trips throughout the day.
9. 1 more evening trip around would be great. Great local driver!
10. A large bus will be nicer, as it can accommodate more tourists
11. Shuttle with too few seats, not everyone from the Calgary **Flixbus** could hop in. Time in between the different schedules (2 hours) is too long. Every hour would make more sense to dilute visitors and would convince people to stop at the school and mine.
12. The shuttle bus is a great option for visitors to explore Drumheller without needing a car. However, the bus is too small for the number of people using the service, especially during busy times. It would also be great to have more frequent departures instead of only every two hours. More frequent service would make it much more convenient for visitors and improve the overall experience.
13. Friendly driver. On Time. Clean and Neat. Thank you for having this pilot project. More seats, more days (Sunday) and more frequently (rather than 2 hrs if one hrs gap will be great)
14. It was awesome. The only improvement would be to expand.
15. The driver was incredibly friendly and knowledgeable. A second bus to allow hourly pick-ups would be useful, but not necessary.
16. The bus could be slightly bigger (although we were with a group of 20 people). The bus driver was really nice
17. It's great to have this transportation at all, thank you very much for that! The driver on Aug 1st was great and friendly and helpful! The only downside was that on a way to the Tyrell Museum the bus was overcrowded and we had to sit down on the floor. Also, it feels like the destinations along the east loop are a lot less popular than the west loop (because of the museum) so it would make sense to make 2 west loops for each east loop.
18. I really liked the bus driver he was really helpful during the day. The opportunity to get across Drumheller for free is awesome. The things that could be possible made better are: more busses or bigger busses as we were with a group of 20 people who could not fit all in the bus.
19. The bus driver was very kind. It would have been better if there were more buses.
20. Bigger bus
21. Very nice ride, friendly driver, not enough seats unfortunately, and limited busses and departure times

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22. There should be two shuttles at the downtown; one towards East one towards West at the same time.
23. It was full @ 10am so maybe a 2nd bus b/c a mother and small child from Calgary were denied :(
24. All good. Hope more frequent buses
25. Very on time and reliable, friendly and knowledgeable drivers, comfortable. Maybe more frequent buses to hop on/off
26. I liked that the shuttle was always on time, but the wait time was too long. Consider adding more trips. Ideally if trips are every hour instead of two, we could visit more places.
27. A more. Frequent shuttle between mine and school museum?
28. It would be great if the shuttle could run until around September
29. Keep it going/more often
30. It was really ease to catch the bus and the drive was very friendly and professional. I just wish it was also available on Sundays!
31. It was a great service, we had taken transport from Calgary airport to Drumheller for a three day stay. We didn't have a rental car for this part of our trip. We didn't know about the shuttle before we arrived but it made a great difference to us being able to get around without relying on the one taxi service, who was also very good, and we used the taxi around the times the shuttle wasn't available. We booked the museum tickets for 10am, having a slightly earlier service to tie in with earlier times for this would be good. I don't think charging would put people off, it has to be sustainable but also affordable. Maybe you could charge for adults but kids go free, or have the option of a single shuttle ticket or a day pass. As different people will have different needs. We would definitely use the service again if visiting, I feel we were lucky to be there on the right day, so if you can increase the amount of days it is in use, that would be good.

STOPS, ROUTES AND SCHEDULE COORDINATION

1. The only thing we could think of was maybe one or two small stops on cool landscapes to be able to take pictures
2. Amazing idea to have a few minutes at the hoodoos to explore and not have to wait there for the pick up two hours later. Maybe it would be better to connect the tours from the coal mine to the bus stops. So the people can reach them in time.
3. Andy the driver was great! Perhaps add a stop to horseshoe canyon.
4. Love AC. Add stop @ horseshoe canyon.
5. Add a stop at the star mine suspension bridge as that would be a nice spot to visit with transit. I think adding it to the project right now would help boost options!
6. I liked unexpectedly visit cool places i didn't even know about. The trip was a bit long though and we didn't plan spending that much time. Driver is a great guy!
7. I think the published map should put the West Loop at the top and the East Loop at the bottom. The East Loop is really to the south-east, so the map would better match reality if they were switched and be easier to understand. We liked how the timetable matched-up with the **FlixBus** from Calgary, and the friendliness of the bus driver. The 15-minute stop at the Hoodoos is a good idea.
8. Everything was amazing. I really enjoyed this day. Long stop on Atlas Coal Mine (10 min) to take a photo if you don't want take a guided tour up to the Mines.
9. Maybe you could add a short stop to the world's tallest dinosaur
10. Great location to get on. Obvious where to board. Air conditioning bus. More frequency would be preferred (every hour as opposed to two). Maybe a stop in Rosedale.
11. On time, reliable. Add more stops like suspension bridge and canyons, etc.
12. Thanks for initiating this! It'd be nice to do the return trip on the other side, instead of doing the whole loop one-way
13. More stops! Maybe Rosebud or Wayne.

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14. No cost. I'd improve the time at the hoodoos to spend at least 30 minutes
15. Overall the signage and general navigating was great. The design of the schedule wasn't so easy to follow initially. A timetable would be a simple supplemented solution to the looped design. I think the only worry I had was if the shuttle would be too full, then what we would have to do. I wasn't sure how many people would take it each way but it seemed to just perfectly fit everyone for the day!
16. Better stops for local vs. Tourists ex. Walmart, Sam's Kitchen, No Frills, etc. or just more stops - Sat & Sunday service vs Fridays & Saturdays - Great driver, friendly & excellent customer service
17. loved it, please keep it. guy who was driving was rly nice. we used it on the 10th of july. bus left on time. add a station to horseshoe canyon
18. There are other areas that I'd love to be able to get to as my husband and I are avid birders. Our main method of transportation right now is by shanks mare...aka walking. Having a bus service to the picnic area at McMullen Island Day Use would allow us to be able to explore the area.

AMENITIES, COMFORT, SAFETY AND COMMUNICATIONS

1. Great signage at pick up area. Bus roof had a loud rattle
2. The bus was great! Worked just as I thought it would, and on time. I thought about riding my bike into town to take the bus but there is nowhere near the plaza to park/lock up a bike. Highly recommend a bike rack at the downtown plaza.
3. Air conditioning good :)
4. Bus was exactly on time at all stops, which was great. Bus could use new shocks, was a very bumpy ride. Was very useful to see the area. Driver was great and personable, the other passengers too. Need more advertising. Thank you very much, loved the ride.
5. Set more shaded seats
6. More benches
7. I don't recall if there were seatbelts aboard but that would be preferred.

Appendix H

VALLEY CONNECT - FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

If Valley Connect returns for another summer, pilot data and feedback from drivers and riders should inform refinements to the route, schedule and decision-making criteria. The table below identifies potential changes for consideration.

Stop	Comments	Considerations for Future Service
Downtown Plaza	Served as the anchor to the route and connection with FlixBus. Community selected central stop location.	Maintain connection (stop and schedule) with the FlixBus. Improve connection or wayfinding to help connect to downtown and pathways. Maintain no parking/bus zone signage.
East Coulee School Museum	Intended to serve as the access point to East Coulee amenities and businesses	Maintain. Continue to build local ridership and promotion of businesses in East Coulee.
Atlas Coal Mine Historic Site	Key destination.	Maintain. If possible, work with Atlas to coordinate better alignment with bus service and on-site tours/train rides.
Hoodooos	Stop over to enable visiting this popular attraction, alongside other attractions on the east loop	Maintain as a stop over, with minimum 15 minute opportunity to explore. and potential for additional time.
Canadian Tire	Intended to provide hotel users access to the service, and a connection for riders to the grocery store and other amenities.	Relocate closer to the hotels (Ramada and Sure Stay or Quality Hotel) for clarity of purpose and improve ridership from this stop.
Royal Tyrrell Museum (RTM)	Key destination, well utilized	Maintain. This stop is likely to hit capacity, so more frequency could be helpful.
Grove Place	Intended to provide campground users access to the service, and a connection for riders to the hotel and other amenities.	Upgrade this sign to a post with sign. The A-frame was often hidden by vehicles in the parking lot. Consider if there's an option closer to the campgrounds (eliminating the need to cross the highway) or relocation to near the Visitor Information Centre.

Appendix H

Consider adding stops in Rosedale and at Hoodoo RV Resort & Campground/Sunny Spot. Both are along the existing route, limiting schedule impacts while connecting more residents and visitors to businesses and attractions.

Heading on the East Loop first received mixed feedback. A West Loop first would better serve FlixBus passengers with timed Royal Tyrrell Museum tickets, while the East Loop first approach encouraged riders to explore downtown and the east Valley. Any change should be considered alongside discussions with FlixBus about returning and serving the museum during Valley Connect operations.

Explore enhancing the service with an audio tour or other visitor experience.

Future marketing should increase local use, clarify the service for FlixBus passengers and reach SAIT, the University of Calgary and Mount Royal University before summer break.



Photos: Downtown Plaza bus stop sign (left) and Grove Place bus stop sign (right)

Appendix 7

SUMMARY OF WHITECOURT TRANSIT

Whitecourt a community of 10,700 people, offers 2 transportation services that operate year round.

Public Transit - [Transit map and schedule](#):

- Public Transit Regular Loop
 - 44 stops, 60 minute loop, approximately 26 kilometers long
 - Monday to Thursday: 6:30 a.m. to 8:44 p.m.
 - Friday: 6:30 a.m. to 7:44 p.m.
 - Saturday 9:00 a.m. to 3:44 p.m.
 - No bus service on Sundays and statutory holidays
- Public Transit Express Route:
 - Launched August 2026
 - 20 stops, 30 minute loop
 - Direct connections to public transit's most popular destinations, and provides shorter wait times at stops, less time on the bus, and faster trips to select destinations for transit riders. Replaced the previous peak service.
 - Monday to Friday
 - Morning Service: 6:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.
 - Afternoon Service: 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.
 - No express service on Saturdays, Sundays and statutory holidays

Dial-A-Bus

- Accessible to-the-door service provided for persons with disabilities (application required to confirm eligibility)
- Hours of Operation: Monday to Friday 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon, and 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. (The last pickup will be at 2:45 p.m.)
- Cash: \$3.00 one-way fee (GST included)
- Voucher: One voucher per one-way ride
- Monthly Pass: \$40.00/month. Can also be used on Public Transit.

Whitecourt's transit system began nearly a decade ago when the Town introduced Dial-A-Bus— previously delivered through a contracted school bus with accessible service. The Town's transit service quickly expanded to provide community-wide public transit with the help of grant funding to purchase three buses (2017). In 2025, their public transit provided around 27,000 conventional-transit trips and 3,900 Dial-A-Bus trips . The Town is current upgrading its bus fleet and has yet to determine next steps for its existing fleet.

Appendix 7

Whitecourt Public Transit Fares:

Cash Fares	\$3
Transit 10-Ticket Pack	\$25
Adult Monthly Pass	\$70
Senior/Youth Monthly Pass	\$40
Children 6 and Under	Free
Youth Groups (contact the Transit Coordinator for more information)	\$1/child

Free public transit provided every Saturday in July and August 2026.

Whitecourt Public Transit Map:



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.

Learn more at www.traveldrumheller.com/destination-drumheller

Use of AI Tools

Travel Drumheller sometimes uses artificial intelligence as a support tool in its day-to-day operations. This report was prepared by the Valley Connect project team using project research, operational data, community feedback and lessons from the pilot. Generative AI tools assisted with data analysis, organizing and summarizing information, copy editing, and exploring ways to present the findings. The project team reviewed, revised and approved all content. Responsibility for the analysis, recommendations, and any errors or omissions rests with Travel Drumheller.

Valley Connect



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#DESTINATION
Drumheller
DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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