
MEETING: Regular Council
DATE: October 16, 2023
TIME: 6:00 PM
LOCATION: Town Council Chambers

AGENDA

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes
 - Minutes of the September 18, 2023 Regular Council meeting and September 19th, 26th, October 4th and October 10th Special meetings of Council.
4. Proclamations/Presentations/Flag Raising
5. Business from Minutes
 -
6. New Business
 - Antigonish Community Transit
 - Antigonish Arena Funding
7. Correspondence
 -
8. Staff Reports
 - CAO Report
9. Committee Reports

**Regular Town Council Minutes
September 18, 2023
Town Council Chambers**

Present

Mayor L. Boucher
Deputy Mayor W. Cormier
Councillor S. Cameron
Councillor M. Farrell
Councillor A. Murray
Councillor D. MacInnis
Councillor D. Roberts

Also Present

CAO J. Lawrence
D. Wilson, Deputy Clerk

M. Barkhouse, Director, Corporate Services
S. Long, Communications Officer
K. Meiser, Director, Facilities
L. Roy, Strategic Initiatives

R. MacDonald, Municipal Advisory, Nova Scotia Municipal Affairs
Media
Observers

Call to Order

Mayor L. Boucher called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM and welcomed those in the gallery.

Approval of Agenda

"It was Moved and Seconded to approve the agenda with three (3) additions." Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

"It was Moved and Seconded to approve the minutes of the Public Hearing and Special Council Minutes of June 8, 2023, Regular Council Minutes of July 17, 2023, Public Hearing of August 21, 2023 and Special Council Minutes of August 21st and 29th and September 5th, 2023, Epoll Minutes of August 2nd and 11, and September 6th, 2023." Motion carried.

Proclamations/Presentations/Flag Raisings

- Municipal Right to Know Proclamation

Mayor L. Boucher read aloud and signed the Municipal Right to Know Proclamation.

- Scotiabank Mini-Pitch

M. Fraser and T. Reddick provided a power point presentation update as a follow-up and final funding request to their earlier appearance before Council.

The delegates stated that a purchase order must be issued in October, prior to Scotiabank's fiscal year-end in order to receive Scotiabank's offer of \$286,000 toward the installation of a mini-pitch.

Noting this was anticipated to be a joint effort of the Town and County, four (4) financial options were provided.

The delegates responded to questions from Councillors.

CAO J. Lawrence spoke to financing the project, indicating the Town has significant operational and capital reserve, and that the approximate cost to the Town would be \$382,000 for option 'D' of the proposal.

The delegates responded to questions from Mayor L. Boucher.

"It was Moved and Seconded to support option 'D' with an approximate cost of \$382,000. to the Town for the mini-pitch project." Motion carried.

- **Municipal Boundary Review**

The Deputy Clerk advised that five (5) written submissions were received regarding the municipal boundary review and read them aloud for the record.

It was noted that four (4) were in favor of the status quo and one (1) in favor of 'districts'.

The Deputy Clerk further noted that one (1) request was received to make an in-person presentation before Council.

Ms. C. Morrow took to the podium to provide her comments on the municipal boundary review, stating her preference to keep the status quo.

CAO J. Lawrence advised Council that should they wish to do so, they could put forth a resolution to have the number of Councillors within the Town of Antigonish remain at six (6).

The CAO and Mayor responded to comments from C. Morrow, with the CAO noting that he expected that there would be a municipal election in October 2024.

Mayor L. Boucher called on Councillors to provide their opinions and the following was put forth:

WHEREAS the Town of Antigonish is legislated through Part XVI, Section 369, of the Municipal Government Act to conduct a review to study the fairness and reasonableness of the size of the Council;

WHEREAS the Town invited residents to provide comments, recommendations or formal presentations to Council through advertisements placed in local papers on August 30th and September 6th, placed on the Town's website on August 21st and social media channels on August 21st, 30th and September 7th, 2023 regarding the municipal boundary review;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the Town of Antigonish that Mayor Laurie Boucher and Chief Administrative Officer Jeff Lawrence sign the application to the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board to have the number of Councillors within the Town of Antigonish remain at six (6) at large." Motion carried.

Business from Minutes

- Solid Waste Management Bylaw

K. MacInnis provided brief comments on the Bylaw.

"It was Moved and Seconded to give Second and Final reading to the Solid Waste Management Bylaw." Motion carried.

- Private Hydrant Bylaw
Brief discussion took place.

"It was Moved and Seconded to give Second and Final reading to the Private Hydrant Bylaw and rescind the private hydrant policy adopted in March, 2023." Motion carried.

New Business

- Voluntary Vulnerable Persons Registry
Councillor D. MacInnis noted that a proposed motion for a vulnerable person registry had come from a recent meeting of the Antigonish Regional Emergency Management Organization advisory committee.

CAO J. Lawrence spoke briefly about the voluntary vulnerable persons registry and responded to questions from Council.

"It was Moved and Seconded that Town Council request that the Province of Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities Public Safety Advisory Committee prioritize the implementation of a province-wide Voluntary Vulnerable Persons Registry, integrated into the 911 system." Motion carried.

- Intersection – St. Ninian & West Streets (Councillor D. MacInnis)
Councillor D. MacInnis spoke to vehicles having having trouble exiting from St. Ninian Street onto West Street where it intersects above Main Street and acknowledged that there currently is increased vehicular traffic due to work being done on the old 104 Highway, although this still remains a concern.

The CAO suggested including a request to have WSP review the area, which would be included in the upcoming budget. Council was in general agreement.

- Appointment of Councillor Re: In Camera Meetings (RK MacDonald Guest Home)
Councillor D. Roberts noted that further to a recent RK MacDonald executive meeting, it was requested that a Town Councillor on the RK Board be appointed who would report details from their in camera meetings to Councils' in camera meetings.

"It was Moved and Seconded to appoint Councillor D. Roberts as the Town's representative to provide Council with details from the executive of the RK Board to Town Council in camera meetings, where the RK MacDonald Board has sanctioned it, as directed by the RK MacDonald Board." Motion carried.

- Antigonish Volunteer Fire Department – Fire Members Appointment
Brief Discussion took place.

"It was Moved and Seconded that Town Council appoint A. Rafuse and K. Pednaud to the Town of Antigonish Volunteer Fire Department as recommended by the Town of Antigonish Volunteer Fire Department Fire Chief." Motion carried.

- **Request Use of Council Chambers**

Brief discussion took place.

"It was Moved and Seconded to amend the 'Use of Council Chambers Policy to include either 'staff' or Council to provide supervision during such use of Council chambers." Motion carried.

"It was Moved and Seconded to permit a non-profit organization to utilize Council Chambers on Tuesday, September 19, 2023, from approximately 8-9:30 PM, and permit a staff member to supervise the use of Council Chambers during the event.

It was noted that M. Barkhouse would attend this meeting, therefore not requiring a councillor to be in attendance.

Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

Staff Reports

Brief discussion took place.

K. Meiser responded to a query from Councillor D. Roberts on a power pole on Hawthorne Street. K. Meisner agreed to investigate the matter.

K. Meisner responded to a query of odor emanating from the sewer lagoon.

"It was Moved and Seconded to approve the CAO Report as presented." Motion carried.

Committee Reports

- **Planning Advisory Committee**

Councillor M. Farrell provided comment on building permit fees to date.

- **Accessibility Advisory Committee**

Councillor D. MacInnis advised that an accessibility meeting would be held in October.

- **Waste Management Committee**

Councillor D. Roberts reported on beach clean ups that had taken place.

Councillor D. Roberts spoke on a 'trading treasures' event, stating work is to begin in November toward an event for the upcoming year. She requested any ideas that Council may have for the event.

Following brief discussion, the CAO agreed that he and K. MacInnis could meet to review the status of waste containers within the town.

Next Town waste clean up September 30th from 10 AM to 12 noon, and invited any Councillors available to participate.

Councillor D. Roberts provided comment on 'meet and greets' that recently took place with university students housed within the Town and provided comment.

Councillor D. Roberts noted that the museum sign is to be erected in the Town-owned flower bed next to the fence.

- Community Enhancement Committee

Councillor A. Murray reported on the flower planters and baskets, noting that the flower baskets on the bridges remain untouched to date.

- Antigonish Town and County Library/Town Volunteer Fire Department

Councillor S. Cameron noted that the Library meeting for this month had been cancelled, and as noted earlier, two (2) new members have been appointed to the Town's volunteer fire department.

Councillor D. MacInnis noted that the fire department recently received the new 'jaws of life'.

Councillor S. Cameron also reported on Crime Prevention and the Antigonish County Learning Association (ACALA).

- Police & License Committee

Deputy Mayor W. Cormier noted that due to advertising timelines a meeting regarding the Nuisance Party Bylaw has been scheduled for October 4th.

With there being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

**Special Town Council Meeting
September 19, 2023
Town Council Chambers**

Present

Mayor L. Chisholm
Deputy Mayor W. Cormier
Councillor M. Farrell
Councillor A. Murray
Councillor D. MacInnis
Councillor D. Roberts

Dianne Wilson

Absent with Regret

Councillor S. Cameron
CAO J. Lawrence

Call to Order

Mayor L. Boucher called the meeting to order at 8:15 PM.

The following motion was put forth:

“It was Moved and Seconded that Council for the Town of Antigonish endorse the motion of the Board of the RK MacDonald Nursing Home in regard to the Agreement of Purchase and Sale as recommended.” Motion carried.

At 8:20 PM the meeting was adjourned.

Special Council Meeting
September 26, 2023 – 6:00 PM
John Paul Center
314 Main Street, Antigonish, NS

Present

Mayor L. Boucher
Councillor S. Cameron
Councillor M. Farrell
Councillor A. Murray
Councillor D. MacInnis
Councillor D. Roberts

CAO J. Lawrence
D. Wilson, Deputy Clerk, Recording Secretary
K. MacInnis, Director, Community Development
S. Long, Communications Officer.

M. Barkhouse, Director, Corporate Services
L. Roy, Strategic Initiatives
K. Proctor, P. Eng., Director, Public Works

J. Bain, Director, Eastern District Planning Commission
D. Sutherland, Planner, Brighter Community Planning & Consulting
Amanda Estabrooks, Designer , Brighter Community Planning & Consulting??

C. Dunbar, Developer

Observers

Absent with Regret

Deputy Mayor W. Cormier

Mayor L. Boucher called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM noting the purpose of the meeting was to hear an appeal by C. Dunbar, developer, on a refused minor variance decision by J. Bain, Director, Eastern District Planning Commission.

Mayor L. Boucher noted that as this was not a public hearing it would not be open to the public to speak.

J. Bain took to the podium and provided a PowerPoint presentation outlining the application request for 129 College Street, Antigonish, and the variance request.

Photos of the site were presented providing an overview of the existing dwellings along College Street (117-129). An aerial photo was presented.

J. Bain outlined polices which permit variances, and details from the Old Town designation, and noted the property is located in the RN-2 zone. Details on the lot requirements were presented. J. Bain provided details on the front yard of the property in question.

J. Bain provided details on a 'test' where a variance may NOT be granted (MGA 235. (a), (b) and (c). It was the opinion that the building is too large for the lot and the reason for the variance request.

J. Bain outlined the intent of the Town's Land Use-Bylaw, which includes a desire for increased density as well as the protection of existing neighbourhoods.

J. Bain noted that a four-plex could be developed, just not to the extent proposed.

J. Bain outlined the options for Council which include upholding the decision of the development officer, or table the decision.

J. Bain responded to questions from Council.

Mayor L. Boucher called on D. Sutherland to speak on behalf of the developer.

A PowerPoint rendering of the exterior elevations of the building was presented.

It was noted that the developer owns the two (2) adjacent properties and that the design was created with the intent to build three (3) mirrored buildings on the lot, and noted it is a high-density zone. The Higher Order, Residential Neighbourhood (HR) Designation and Zone were presented.

D. Sutherland noted that the development was planned comprehensively so that the parking load would be met over the three lots, with property registered easements, as set out in the application; stating that therefore, the proposal meets the conditions of the Land Use Bylaw for parking.

D. Sutherland expanded on the differences between street lines and lot lines.

D. Sutherland provided her conclusion and reasons she felt the decision not to issue the variance should be overturned.

Council responded to questions from D. Sutherland.

Discussion took place on the intent for two (2) older homes to be demolished to allow future development.

Mayor L. Boucher addressed Council, suggesting that Council that they may wish to take more time before making a decision on the matter.

CAO J. Lawrence addressed Council while noting he did not have the staff report distributed to Council prior to the meeting this evening.

"It was Moved and Seconded to table a decision until Tuesday, October 10th at 6:00 PM, to consider an appeal on a minor variance request for 129 College Street." Motion carried.

With there being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

**Special Council Meeting
October 4, 2023
Town Council Chambers**

Present

Mayor L. Boucher
Deputy Mayor W. Cormier
Councillor S. Cameron
Councillor M. Farrell
Councillor A Murray
Councillor D. MacInnis
Councillor D. Roberts

CAO J. Lawrence
D. Wilson, Deputy Clerk
K. Gorman, Director, Community Enhancement

J. DeLeeBeek, St. FX Student Life Representative

Call to Order

Mayor L. Boucher called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM noting the only item on the agenda was to give consideration of 2nd reading to the Nuisance Party Bylaw.

Mayor L. Boucher noted that there was a written submission from the St. FX Student Union.

In response to Mayor L. Boucher, K. Gorman took to the podium and provided a brief review of the proposed bylaw and responded to questions from Council.

Discussion took place.

Mayor L. Boucher called on Council to provide their comments.

The following motion was put forth:

“It was Moved and Seconded that Town Council give 2nd and final reading to the Nuisance Party Bylaw.” Motion carried.

With no further business the meeting was adjourned.

Subject: CAO Report
To: Antigonish Town Council
Date Prepared: 23-10-16
Prepared by: Jeff Lawrence, Chief Administrative Officer

Administration

Administration and our consultants are scheduled to present a water rate application to Council on October 12th, and we anticipate an electric rate application to be ready to go before Council shortly thereafter. Both applications will require Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board approval.

Summer capital works projects are ongoing, and with the additional traffic through Town as a result of the work on Old Post Road, some projects are more challenging than they would otherwise be.

The Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board public hearing on the Town’s electric utility upgrade project was heard on September 27th. Responses to the undertakings from the Board were submitted on October 11th. AREA and Town staff continue towards work on a similar application for the StFX electrification project. Work is progressing at the Brierly Brook solar site with an expected operational date in late 2023.

Construction is delayed on the community trail project due to difficulties in getting Bell to do work on its infrastructure on site, and added complications with the Old Post road work impacting traffic flows. Progress has been made in discussions with Bell and work is expected to begin early in next year’s construction season. The tourism attraction has been presented to joint Council.

With the hurricane season now upon us, the Regional Emergency Management Organization has been reviewing plans and meeting with various stakeholders in anticipation of an active season.

A mechanical issue at the sewage treatment plant resulted in lowering of the oxygen level, and a corresponding loss of bacteria. The mechanical issue has been resolved, and oxygen levels have returned to normal. Bacteria reseeding is ongoing and we hope to have the plant operating at equilibrium in the near future.

Strategic Initiatives Update:

Projects
Title: Carbon Inventory – PCP Milestone Tool
Status Update: Continuing to input data for Carbon Inventory
Next Step: On going
Title: Net Zero Engagement Strategies
Status Update: Working with staff and FCM to develop engagement strategy for green initiatives
Next Step: Have developed a draft RFP for Engagement Services for future use.
Title: Grid Modernization and New Substation
Status Update: Coordinated and attended on the witness panel, the UARB hearing on September 27th.
Next Step: Worked with team on developing responses to Undertakings requested by the Board.
Title: Executive Assistant Duties

Status Update: Organize and schedule meetings for Mayor Boucher
Next Step: Ongoing Correspondence
Title: Grid Modernization and Project Management Services RFP
Status Update: Working with Ray Sampson on Grid Mod Project Overview
Next Step: Developing Gantt Chart for costing and scheduling (on-going)
Title: FCM/SCCF – Community District Energy System (CDES) Feasibility Study
Status Update: A proponent has been selected
Next Step: Working on revised proposal to meet Scope of Work required.
Title: Green Municipal Fund – GHG Reduction Pathway Feasibility Study – Deep Energy Retrofits
Status Update: Study is ongoing. Attended a Decision-Making Workshop to review baseline model and potential energy conservation measures (ECM) with energy and emissions breakdown.
Next Step: Final Report to be received in September (delayed)
Title: i-Valley/i-Mobility
Status Update: Met with Barry Gander and Terry Dalton re: Potential pilot with SARIT electric vehicle and Connected Kerb Charging Infrastructure
Next Step: Future meeting to be determined
Title: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan
Status Update: Attended Stakeholder Workshop and bi-weekly update meetings
Next Step: Continue to work with Consultants and Stakeholders on DE&I Plan

AREA Update:

Projects
Title: AREA weekly updates
Status Update: Attend weekly update meetings
Next Step: On going
Title: HOME Program review
Status Update: Participating in a review of the HOME Program with Liam Cook from Navigate Energy
Next Step: Reviewing surveys to be circulated to HOME participants and utility customers

Subject: CAO Report
To: Antigonish Town Council
Date Prepared: October 11, 2023
Prepared by: Meaghan Barkhouse, Director of Corporate Services

Corporate Services

Highlights

The priority of Corporate Services was preparing and participating in the Grid Modernization Project hearing with the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board (UARB). This was held on Wednesday, September 27th in Town Hall. Additional undertakings were requested from the UARB and those will be completed and filed on October 11th.

The Water Utility’s Rate Study has been completed by the consultants and will be presented to Council on Thursday, October 12th during a Special Council meeting. Corporate Services has been meeting the Electric Utility Cost of Service Study consultants and reviewing the draft report with them. It will soon be ready for further administrative review, then presented to Council as soon as it is available.

Corporate Services has successfully completed the on-site portion of the year-end audits. The Manager of Accounting is working with the auditors to complete a new auditing requirement for organizations that follow Public Sector Accounting Board (PSAB) standards – Asset Retirement Obligation (ARO). The project includes scoping larger Town assets and preparing the justification if it falls under the new ARO standards.

Department Update:

Projects
Title: Tax Sale
Status Update: The property has been removed from tax sale process.
Next Step: Review to ensure process is following internal Tax Policy and the MGA.
Title: Human Resources
Status Update: The Active Living Coordinator position closed on September 25 th , and interviews were held on October 3 rd . The Director is contacting interviewee’s references and is hoping to make an offer by October 13 th to the successful candidate.
Next Step: Conducting and reviewing references
Title: Hurricane Fiona Disaster Finance Application
Status Update: Corporate Services is complying the Town’s expenses and working with insurance as part of the application process.
Next Step: Ongoing
Title: In Development: Charitable Donation Policy
Status Update: Corporate Services has prepared a charitable donation policy for the Town of Antigonish. This would formalize the charitable donation receipt program and outline the standards for evaluating donations in accordance with Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA) guidelines. This is in the review stage.
Next Step: Finalize and prepare a memo to Council regarding a Charitable Donation Policy.
Title: In Development: Work from Home Policy

<p>Status Update: Corporate Services has created a draft Work from Home (WFH) policy that is currently in the review stage before being presented to Council.</p>
<p>Next Step: Finalize and prepare a memo to Council regarding a Work from Home Policy.</p>
<p>Title: Asset Retirement Obligation</p>
<p>Status Update: The Director of Corporate Services and Manager of Accounting has met with the AIM Network, a federally incorporated not-for-profit organization that specializes in asset management for municipal infrastructure to help develop the reports needed for the financial auditors to include in the 2022-23 financial statements. The discussion also clarified any assets that would be considered in or out of scope.</p>
<p>Next Steps: Prepare inventory of assets are that required by the new accounting standard.</p>

Please note:

March 2023 Financial Statements are not released until the year-end audit is complete. They will be presented to Council by the auditors.

2023-24 Electric Utility and Water Utility budget will be presented when the rate study consultants complete their reports.

Council Report
General Fund
For the Six Months Ending 9/30/2023

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>Remaining</u>
	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Budget</u>
Revenue					
Taxes	\$7,501,015.37	\$7,137,635.63	\$6,965,288.62	\$6,907,110.19	\$363,379.74
Grants in Lieu of Taxes	1,109,614.80	7,014.00	1,050,533.12	54,985.94	1,102,600.80
Sale of Services	949,423.24	251,236.26	879,691.10	300,680.85	698,186.98
Services provided to other governments	302,534.66	(3,258.34)	311,428.76	155,714.38	305,793.00
Other revenue from own sources	143,000.00	83,094.57	147,450.00	152,986.22	59,905.43
Unconditional Transfers from other governments	478,844.00	88,685.00	235,612.16	44,489.00	390,159.00
Other Transfers	2,142,198.00		2,198,427.50		2,142,198.00
	<u>12,626,630.07</u>	<u>7,564,407.12</u>	<u>11,788,431.26</u>	<u>7,615,966.58</u>	<u>5,062,222.95</u>
Expenditure					
Mayor and Council	435,049.94	258,805.02	401,180.53	262,974.98	176,244.92
Corporate Services and Office of the CAO	2,756,301.97	621,731.13	2,547,505.53	540,280.91	2,134,570.84
Engineering and Public Works	1,493,387.33	933,221.84	1,448,570.89	665,330.64	560,165.49
Environmental Health Services	1,391,965.57	464,906.69	1,389,991.12	532,393.44	927,058.88
Community Development Administration	399,058.99	187,173.80	416,795.08	201,198.08	211,885.19
Partnerships & Initiatives	564,329.81	414,130.34	497,621.73	377,173.46	150,199.47
Protective Services	2,997,244.13	648,762.17	2,811,877.32	1,090,570.76	2,348,481.96
Recreation and Cultural Services	728,691.84	430,112.45	566,357.06	331,296.95	298,579.39
Provincial Responsibilities	1,760,577.56	705,224.95	1,708,532.00	771,817.52	1,055,352.61
	<u>12,526,607.14</u>	<u>4,864,068.39</u>	<u>11,788,431.26</u>	<u>4,773,036.74</u>	<u>7,862,538.75</u>
Excess(deficiency) of revenue over expenditure	<u>100,022.93</u>	<u>2,900,338.73</u>		<u>2,842,929.84</u>	<u>(2,800,315.80)</u>

Subject: CAO Report
To: Antigonish Town Council
Date Prepared: October 2023
Prepared by: Kate MacInnis, Director of Community Development

Community Development

Strategic Projects of Council:

Projects
Active Transportation Corridor
Status Update: Met with Bell on second phase of pole move.
Next Step: Revising tender schedule with WSP and looking at design options for cost savings. Pole move for Project A has not been confirmed. Next step will be reviewing potential property infringement for Project B and speaking with impacted property owners.
Accessibility
Status Update: Implementation of Report
Next Step: Staff to work with Council and committee to prioritize ‘quick wins’ identified in the Accessibility Report. Staff are also working with Challenger Baseball to bring back the Accessible Antigonish initiative, which focuses on low cost recreation base initiatives such as picnic tables, small ramps, equipment, etc.
Tourism
Status Update: Draft Marketing Levy By-Law
Next Step: Staff have drafted a Marketing Levy By-Law that is now with legal for review. Staff from Community Development and Corporate Services met with County counterparts to discuss the administrative processes for the by-law and how to manage the intake of funds and invoicing for shared tourism initiatives. Staff will present the by-law to Council in November.

Capital Projects:

Projects
Active Transportation – Design Pt 2
Staff are working with Bell to get the second phase of the pole move done in the early Spring. The intent is to have the construction phase follow the pole move. In order to accomplish this timeline, revised tenders will need to be posted early in the new year. Staff are looking at options for cost savings by changing some aspects of smaller design components. Staff are also working on options surrounding the railway crossing for Project D.
Community Enhancements
Materials purchased for Get the Town Growing and Butterfly Mural. Main Street garbage bins to be replaced.
Crosswalk Beacons
Beacons have been ordered. Contractor will be arriving in Town to install time in the next few weeks. Locations include James Street, West Street and Main Street by Columbus Field. These are the last areas that would require beacons according to crosswalk standards.
Fire Department Jaws
Completed.
Arbor Drive Playground
Equipment has been ordered. Expected arrival is December/January. Signage about no ATVs/offroad vehicles in the area will be added to mitigate some concerns from residents in the area.

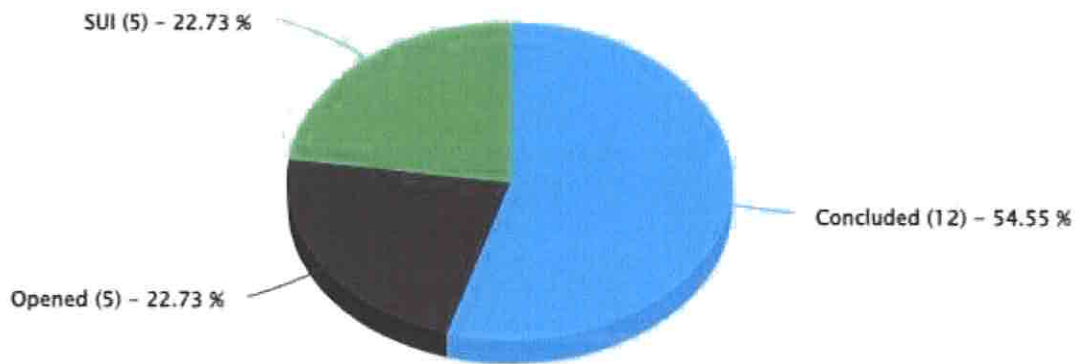
Operational Projects:

Project
Beautification
Staff have begun drafting the 2024-2027 Landscaping Contract RFQ. The RFQ will be published early in the New Year and be reviewed prior to budget considerations. Town, County and Bayside staff have yet to meet to begin the work on new welcome signage, as well as recognition at the Landing to reflect Mi'kmaq language. Time will be set aside to begin this project over the next few weeks.
Pedestrian Safety
Crosswalk standards report has been endorsed. Fluorescent signage will be replaced with the RA-4 standard black and white. Next phase is looking at mid-block crosswalk safety.
Parking Meter Repairs
Work on Main Street Parking Meters is expected to begin mid October. 21 Meters will be replaced. Creighton Lane requires similar level of replacement work. Staff are working on a plan for Council budget consideration. The in meantime, two bases need to be removed due to safety concerns and Out of Order Bags were ordered for those that are not working.
Town Hall Lighting
Draft RFP in development.
Town & StFX Partnership
Ahead of Homecoming, staff shared a message with landlords from StFX regarding on campus events and good tenant behaviour. By-Law will be playing a support role with RCMP on Homecoming.
Wayfinding & Signage
With the departure of the Active Living Coordinator, the new Landing signage and trail markers will be delayed.
Community Grants
Completed for 2023.
Programming
Fall Multi-Sport is going well. Staff retained the support of the Summer Camp Coordinator to assist with the running of Multisport until a new Active Living Coordinator is hired. Interviews for the Active Living Coordinator Position were conducted, the hope is to fill the position by the end of October. There will be a time period set aside for onboarding. The new hire will look to get programs up for Winter and Spring.
By-law and Policy Projects:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nuisance Party By-Law (Adopted – Follow-up with Municipal Affairs once advertising commences) • Private Hydrant By-Law (Updates to final advertising required) • Solid Waste By-Law (Updates to final advertising required) • Traffic Control/Sidewalk Encroachment By-Law (research phase for potential proposal) • Sidewalk Café By-Law (scheduled for amendment) • Sponsorship/Naming Rights Policy (Marking and Communications Officer Drafting) • Facility Allocation Policy (in progress and in partnership with the County) • Community Events Policy (proposed) • Nuisance Wildlife/Animal Feeding By-Law (proposed)

By-Law Enforcement Statistics:

Reporting Period: September 7 to October 10, 2023

**Our system OCID is going through internal software updates, so files for this month's report aren't categorized as per normal.*



Antigonish RCMP Monthly Report for September 2023

Occurrence and Crime Reporting- Calls for Service

Type of file	Town	County	Paqtnkek	Totals
Crime against Person	10	14	0	24
Crime against Property	32	28	2	62
Impaired Driving	2	9	1	12
Traffic Collisions	12	12	1	25
Traffic Complaints	14	65	2	81
Drug Complaints	0	2	0	2
Other Municipal	19	1	0	20
Mental Health/Wellness	14	10	3	27
Other Criminal Code	8	12	2	22
Assist Other Gov't Agency	3	4	0	7
Crime Prevention	6	2	0	8

Antigonish detachment members responded to a total of 494 calls for service during the month of September including the categories noted above.

Notable Events

Back to school! Multiple SAFE school plans were updated and code Blue practices were held during September. Extra attention was given to crosswalks and safe busing of the returning students. At the end of the month RCMP members participated in the Helping the Helpers Softball tournament.

Community Policing/School Resource Officer

CPO Activity – Has injured herself and will be off-duty for the foreseeable future.

Impaired Driving Charges

On 2023/09/05 at approximately 8:00 pm an off duty and happened upon an accident along highway 104. The member spoke with all the parties and identified the driver who he noted to be intoxicated. Uniformed members attended and arrested the driver who provided samples of 170 mg% and 170Mg%. The investigation is currently before the courts.

On 2023/09/09 As the result of a vehicle stop on highway 104, a 40-year-old male was arrested for impaired operation of a motor vehicle and he subsequently provided samples of 140 mg% and 140mg%. This investigation is before the courts.

On 2023/09/30 as the result of a traffic stop on James Street a 27-year-old male was arrested after producing a FAIL the roadside screening device. He was arrested for Impaired Operation of a motor vehicle and he subsequently provided samples of 90 mg% and 80 mg%.

Traffic Enforcement

Septembers traffic focus was "Back to School" and after receiving multiple complaints concerning people not obeying crossing guards our members spent some time in the hotspot locations around our local schools. Education was key as members stopped drivers and pointed out the offences and the dangers of not obeying crossing guards, school bus lights and failing to yield to pedestrians.

Human Resources

Two positions remain vacant.

1 Soft vacancy – Maternity leave.

1 ODS



Cst Lyle Reid, Cpl Dennis Munroe and Cst Arnold Murphy as part of the RCMP King's Cowboys Softball team!

Subject: CAO Report
To: Antigonish Town Council
Date Prepared: 10/October/2023
Prepared by: Ken Proctor, P. Eng., Director of Public Works

Engineering & Municipal Services

Capital Projects/Tender Update:

Projects
Title: 23/24 Budgets
Status Update: : Budget presented to Town Council and approved – May 23
Next Step: Budget under review
Title: AT Trail Project (ToA)
Status Update: Ongoing assistance with infrastructure
Next Step: Ongoing followup meetings with consultants (WSP). Followups continue with the delay by Bell Aliant for required scheduling of pole adjustments. Contacts with Stakeholder groups continues for right of way impacts Project A – Review of West St section continues for scope and retender Project D – Dwgs at 95% design stage. Bell /CBNSR followups required Impacts of new Hwy4/Trk7 Roundabout 60day detour continue to be assessed for scheduling .
Title: Accessibility Report (Final)
Status Update: Final Report presented to Town Council
Next Step: Followups for policy pending
Title: ICIP Applications – Bay St
Status Update: : Application Review
Next Step Followups continue regarding application funding approval RFP Preparation in progress for Design Services Contacts in process with CBNSR for railway crossings and EDPC for the J Paradis DA. RFP release pending
Title: Hwy4 AT/Roundabout Project
Status Update: Ongoing followups with NSTiR on concepts/proposed schedule for the phased 4 yr project
Next Step: NSTiR contact on Municipal Infrastructure continues. Phase 1 project detour extended to Oct 19 Municipal work – watermain completed. Sewermain work in process of commissioning Meetings ongoing for scheduling and construction agreements for Phase 2 (Church St/Hwy 4).

Electric Utility (EU):

Projects
Title: 23/24 Budgets
Status Update: Preparations continue for NSURB Application
Next Step:
Title: 10yr Capital Plan
Status Update: Plan submitted to CAO & Corporate Services
Next Step: NSURB Hearing for SREP capital spending approvals held Sept 27 in Town Council Chambers Submission of Undertakings to be made within 2 weeks
Title: Solar Garden and BRBB Pole line for Solar Garden

<p>Status Update: Site work construction resumed mid June Site erosion control measures continues to be assessed Ongoing contact by ToA/AREA with NS Dept of Environment (NSE) on project status Frame system and solar panels being installed on upper and lower levels New pole line to Hawthorne – Access road constructed for NSPI work . EU to resume work once NSPI completes 2 cross over points</p>
<p>Next Step: Project followups in progress</p>
<p>Title: NSPI/ToA EU Meeting</p>
<p>Status Update: Assessment of the recloser issue at Cloverville Substation</p>
<p>Next Step: Information exchanged with NSPI. Awaiting a maintenance agreement and next steps for servicing</p>
<p>Title: EU Equipment</p>
<p>Status Update: All equipment is in service Training on new equipment purchases completed Followups in progress for Rubber Glove Code of Practice</p>
<p>Title: Power Outages</p>
<p>Status Update: 4 Substation outages Sept 15-16 due to Hurricane Lee. Issues NSPI related and resolved Power flickers at mini sub Post Rd. Issues NSPI related and resolved</p>
<p>Next Step:</p>
<p>Title: Operations Items</p>
<p>Status Update: Items as noted below</p>
<p>Next Step: Work Items - ongoing “Yellow” lites - arrival of warranty items expected Oct 10 Pole Line Work – BRBB & MT MacIsaac (near completion). Work at #7 Roundabout completed New Service Pole and Transformer bank for Main St Irving (completed) West St/Highland Dr intersection-awaiting update on Traffic controller servicing Tree trimming work areas being assessed for contractor quotes /scheduling. Work at Indian Gardens in progress Service Connections/Disconnections Electrical Inspections Ongoing Meter reading</p>
<p>Title: Pole Mount transformers</p>
<p>Status Update: Additional deliveries received</p>
<p>Next Step: Installs being assessed with EU Grid project scheduling</p>
<p>Title: Updated COVID 19 Restrictions</p>
<p>Status Update: Assessing provincial updates</p>
<p>Next Step: Adjust as necessary and/or required</p>
<p>Title: Exploration of Municipal Consolidation</p>
<p>Status Update: Information provided and staff attending update sessions</p>
<p>Next Step: To be determined as process continues</p>

Water Utility:

<p>Projects</p>
<p>Title: 23/24 Budgets</p>
<p>Status Update: Preparations continue for NSURB Application</p>
<p>Next Step:</p>
<p>Title: Source Water Review</p>
<p>Next Step: Study Followups continuing with Consultant.</p>
<p>Next Steps: Phase 4 continues with site assessment reviews Refinement of short listed sites in progress for considerations of refined drilling exploration. Site visits completed. Update for preliminary site testing under review</p>

Title: Water Utility Items
Status Update: JRD level – Oct average el 333.70' (or 3.8" over the spillway) Residuals Management review continues with consultants (CBCL) Followup NSE submission to System Assessment Report (SAR) submitted Sept 29 NSE submission for Annual water sampling program submitted Sept 29 Water Rate Study - Presentation pending to Council for submission to NSURB Application
Next Step:
Title: Fire Hydrants
Status Update: Annual maintenance ongoing. (Various service work in progress) Policy-Bylaw for Private Hydrants being reposted for approvals Fall Hydrant Flushing - Proposed for Oct 31, Nov 01 & 02
Next Step:
Title: Main Line Water Valves
Status Update: Assessment of operational status continues
Next Step: Assessment for Work in 2nd quadrant continues for 2023/2024. College /Creighton lane valve work completed College at Pleasant and Xavier Dr at Hillside valvework completed Acadia /Pleasant valvework pending Capping of old 4" main work on West St rescheduled due to NSTiR Hwy4/#7 detour Church/Mall and Hawthorne - scheduling likely for mid fall. Upper section of Hillcrest St experiencing water discoloration. Interim flushing in progress
Title: Water Breaks
Status Update: No breaks encountered
Next Step: Area breaks on College to be reinstated once main paving work completed
Title: Updated COVID 19 Restrictions
Status Update: Assessing provincial updates
Next Step: Adjust as necessary and/or required
Title: Exploration of Municipal Consolidation
Status Update: Information provided and staff attending update sessions
Next Step: To be determined as process continues

Sewer/Storm:

Projects
Title: 23/24 Budgets
Status Update: Budget presented to Town Council and approved – May 23
Next Step:
Title: NSE Permit to Operate
Status Update: Requirement for System Assessment Report (SAR)
Next Step: Followup on CBCL SAR Report continues. Review of Consultant's memo (CBCL) on options for STP Front End upgrades continues Recent STP odors reported due to aeration equipment replacement to main air supply. Adjustments to lagoons levels and floatables ongoing as weather events occur
Title: System Conveyance
Status Update: Checks of Murphy's Brook areas ongoing. Vegetation removal and Site work completed I/I reduction work Columbus Field completed , College /Creighton Lane work completed Sewer Cleaning tender awarded to GFL. Work Scheduling is pending
Next Step:
Title: Hurricane Fiona / Other Storms
Status Update: Provincial /DNR assessment of trees near river areas still pending
Next Step: Fiona costs compiled and forwarded to Corporate Services for recovery of costs Tree cutting near Brierly Brook (across at 2 Court St) completed

<p>July 22- 120mm of rain received. No reported damage Aug 30- 40mm of rain received . No reported damage Sept 16 - Hurricane/TS Lee . 4 power outages. No reported damage Sept 30 - TS Phillipe – 35mm of rain, power flickers. No Reported damage</p>
Title: Updated COVID 19 Restrictions
Status Update: Assessing provincial updates NSHA contact for participation on testing program
Next Step: Adjust as necessary and/or required
Title: Exploration of Municipal Consolidation
Status Update: Information provided and staff attending update sessions
Next Step: To be determined as process continues

Public Properties & Streets

Projects
Title: 23/24 Budgets
Status Update: Budget presented to Town Council and approved – May 23
Next Step:
Title: Seasonal / Street Operations
Status Update: Street Sweeping is ongoing Sodding repairs ongoing for street and sidewalk work Street patching ongoing (Bay, Main, College) Sidewalk/Curb Tender - Xavier (Northview to Braemore) completed, College St (Pleasant to Malcom Crt work completed Paving Tender - work awarded to Webster Bros work in progress and 75% complete Traffic Marking work - Applications completed
Next Step: Work is ongoing pending weather conditions
Title: PWD Equipment & Bldg
Status Update. Sidewalk plows being serviced Backhoe being serviced New PWD Service Truck – in service All other equipment in service
Next Steps:
Title: Staffing
Status Update PWD Staff obtaining additional NSE system certifications 6 month temp hire for Machine Operator- Laborer to be posted
Next Step:
Title: Community Development
Status Update: Discussions continue for review of various requests/inquires and or project overlaps Mid block crosswalk signage being adjusted to reflect provincial regulations
Next Step: Awaiting followups
Title Updated COVID 19 Restrictions
Status Update Assessing provincial updates
Next Step: Adjust as necessary and/or required
Title: : Exploration of Municipal Consolidation
Status Update: Information provided and staff attending update sessions
Next Step: To be determined as process continues

Waste Management:

Projects
Title: 23/24 Budgets
Status Update: Budget presented to Town Council and approved – May 23
Next Step:
Title: Solid Waste Items
Status Update: Waste Management Bylaw - Reposting of Bylaw in progress Biweekly organics collection resumes after week of Oct 11 Large Bulky Waste – Fall collection completed Sept 11, 12, 13
Next steps: Bylaw being reposted for approvals
Title: Waste disposal weights – awaiting Sept data to Aug 31, 2023
Status Update: RWC -501 T, ICI - 1537 T
Next Step:

Ken Proctor, P.Eng.
Director of Public Works

MEMO FOR DISCUSSION

TO: Council
FROM: Jeff Lawrence, CAO
SUBJECT: ***ANTIGONISH COMMUNITY TRANSIT***
DATE: October 16, 2023

Summary

Following discussions with the Antigonish Community Transit Society (ACTS) Board of Directors, the Town and County Councils are being provided with an update and a proposal to assess future needs and service model options for community transit.

Background

On June 22, the Mayor, Warden, County CAO and I met with the ACTS Board. The purpose of the meeting was to share the *Fixed Bus Route Report* that was completed earlier that same month (attached for your reference).

In summation, this report states that the fixed bus route service (the 1-hour loop around Town, Post Road & Mount Cameron) was not sustainable as it currently exists, and ACTS will have to make decisions about the future of this service by Mar/April 2024. The report also made a case for municipal ownership and operation of the Fixed Route and further recommended changes to the service to enhance ridership, including additional promotion, placement of bus shelters and partnerships with user groups.

The ACTS Board provided the report and spoke candidly about the challenges associated with the fixed route service. They asked that we work together to determine a way forward.

Considerations

Based on the report provided, and discussions with the ACTS Board, Town and County officials are prepared to recommend that the three groups work together to further assess the community's needs for fixed route transit and how that fits with the overall community transit system. Based on those needs, we would then develop service delivery model options including long-term financial, operational and governance structures.

With that information in hand, ACTS and the municipalities can further discuss the challenges of community transit and where to go from here. This approach will take a step back from the *Fixed*

Bus Route Report and assess all options for community transit services, so we determine what service level and model aligns with residents' needs. All options will be on the table.

Both the Town and County have made applications to the federal government's Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) that, if successful, would provide funding for this purpose. We expect to know in fall 2023 if our applications are successful.

This proposed approach was discussed and agreed among the County CAO, ACTS Executive Director and me. It was agreed that if the ACTS Board was supportive, it would be brought to Town and County Councils for consideration. The ACTS Board met on Tuesday, September 19 and agreed to this proposed approach.

Next Steps

If Town Council is supportive of this proposed approach to assess community transit services and models, we will wait to learn if the Town's HAF application is successful. County Council will receive the same information for its consideration. If applications are successful and all organizations are aligned, this work will commence later this fall.

ANTIGONISH COMMUNITY TRANSIT



Fixed Bus Route Report

June 2023



COMMON GOOD SOLUTIONS

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Introduction

In Nova Scotia, two provincial organizations exist to support rural communities across the province with their efforts to ensure all Nova Scotians have access to transportation. The Nova Scotia Community Transportation Network (NSCTN) is a non-profit organization that advocates and supports the 22 community-based transportation providers in Nova Scotia. By sharing information, providing education, advocacy, and innovation, they help to build a strong integrated community transportation sector across rural Nova Scotia.

The Rural Transportation Association is also a provincial-wide body and network of community-based organizations that are on the ground, providing affordable door-to-door transportation services on a pre-booked basis in rural communities of Nova Scotia.



"Not everyone has access to a car, but everyone needs to travel. Public transit allows people to get to work, school, medical appointments or to just have fun."

- The Honourable Tim Houston,
Premier of Nova Scotia

Rural transit systems like the Antigonish Community Transit Society (ACTS) that offer a fixed-route bus service face many challenges associated with operating costs. This is primarily due to smaller populations, resulting in lower ridership and insufficient fare revenue to run a break-even operation.

Rural communities need more investment to have the financial capacity to maintain an accessible and affordable transit system. Unfortunately, at present, there is limited funding available specifically for the operations of a fixed bus route. Municipalities are not required to provide transportation as an essential service and must fund these operations through their budgeting process. While ACTS currently receives annual operating funds from both the County and the Town of Antigonish, given the challenges faced by rural municipalities due to competing priorities, this places ACTS in a tenuous position for the long-term sustainability of its operation.



Community Profile

The Antigonish region is in the northeastern part of the province of Nova Scotia, along the scenic Northumberland Strait. Antigonish is a popular stop for people travelling between Cape Breton and Halifax as it is conveniently located at the halfway mark on the journey.

It is home to St. Francis Xavier University, the Coady Institute, St Martha's Regional Hospital, the world-renowned Peace by Chocolate, the award-winning People's Place: Antigonish Town and County Library, the Weekly Farmer's Market, Festival Antigonish, and the very popular Antigonish Highland Games, celebrating 158 years in 2023. The Town of Antigonish also serves as the main shopping area with the larger grocery stores, the local shopping mall, several popular restaurants and many independent retail stores. It is also home to many health care services such as optometrists, pharmacies, and dentists, physiotherapists, and family physicians. It also has many businesses and community organizations.

The total population of the Municipality of the County of Antigonish is 20,129 persons. (2021 Census data) The Town's population is 4,626, While these numbers account for permanent residents, the population and demographics of Town doubles for eight months of the year with an additional 4,500 students attending St. Francis Xavier University. Approximately 1600 students reside in STFX housing, 35% of students are from outside the province, 45% from NS and 20% are International.

The Municipality of the County of Antigonish consists of many smaller communities and villages including Havre Boucher, Tracadie, Pomquet, Paq'tnkek First Nation, Heatherton, St. Andrews, Arisaig, Cape George and St. Joseph's.

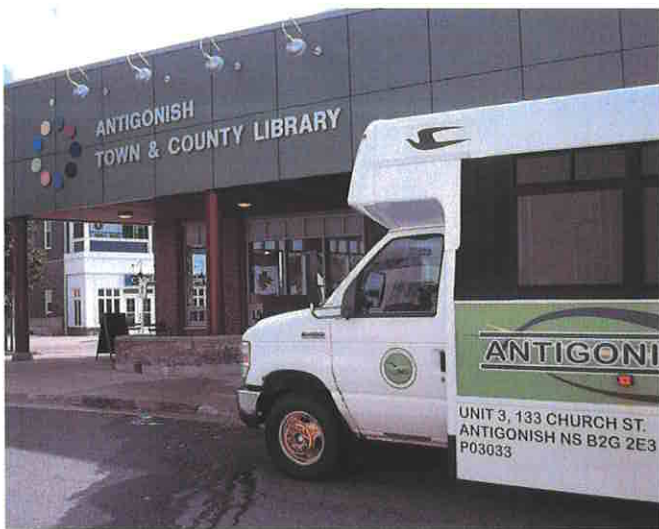
Like many rural communities, the Antigonish region is becoming an older demographic community with several new senior housing developments, the Maples Supportive Living and Retirement and Antigonish Parkland and Shannex.

A recent article on the Web site "The Travel" ranked Antigonish second on a list of the top ten prettiest coastal towns in Nova Scotia. The site listed the local cultural and festival scene and highlighted the annual Highland games, and the beautiful natural surroundings including local beaches, parks, and forests.

Project Goals and Objectives

The overarching goal of this project is to provide guidance to Antigonish Community Transit Society (ACTS) to assist the Board of Directors and the Executive Director with any plans and decisions regarding future changes to the Fixed Bus Route Services.

- To understand the current and future demand for transit services in the Antigonish region.
- Review the existing route and explore improvements to better serve the area.
- Survey existing clients and others to determine awareness and knowledge of the service and seek feedback.
- Review current times of service and provide options to extend hours and possible weekend service.
- Determine the gaps in the service.
- Develop a project plan to implement suggested solutions to fill the gaps.
- Working with the town/county of Antigonish, explore areas where bus stop shelters could be erected and determine where bus stops should be added or removed.



Antigonish Community Transit Town Bus Schedule - Monday to Friday								
Bus Stop	Timing is approximate and dependent on traffic							
Antigonish Mall	9:00	10:00	11:00	12:00	1:00	2:00	3:00	4:00
Highland Housing Co-op	9:03	10:03	11:03	12:03	1:03	2:03	3:03	4:03
Bloomfield Centre	9:05	10:05	11:05	12:05	1:05	2:05	3:05	4:05
Keating Centre	9:08	10:08	11:08	12:08	1:08	2:08	3:08	4:08
Atlantic Superstore	9:13	10:13	11:13	12:13	1:13	2:13	3:13	4:13
Walmart	9:14	10:14	11:14	12:14	1:14	2:14	3:14	4:14
Whiddens Trailer Park	9:20	10:20	11:20	12:20	1:20	2:20	3:20	4:20
Shamrock Acres	9:23	10:23	11:23	12:23	1:23	2:23	3:23	4:23
Sylvan Valley Apartments	9:25	10:25	11:25	12:25	1:25	2:25	3:25	4:25
Hawthorne Variety	9:27	10:27	11:27	12:27	1:27	2:27	3:27	4:27
JJ Carroll House	9:30	10:30	11:30	12:30	1:30	2:30	3:30	4:30
Antigonish Manor	9:32	10:32	11:32	12:32	1:32	2:32	3:32	4:32
People's Place Library	9:34	10:34	11:34	12:34	1:34	2:34	3:34	4:34
Canadian Tire Gas Bar	9:36	10:36	11:36	12:36	1:36	2:36	3:36	4:36
The Maples	9:43	10:43	11:43	12:43	1:43	2:43	3:43	4:43
Parkland (Shannex)	9:46	10:46	11:46	12:46	1:46	2:46	3:46	4:46
St. Martha's Hospital	9:50	10:50	11:50	12:50	1:50	2:50	3:50	4:50
The Sunflower	9:53	10:53	11:53	12:53	1:53	2:53	3:53	4:53
Sobeys	9:57	10:57	11:57	12:57	1:57	2:57	3:57	4:57

Note:

The final action item needs to be further explored once the report has been made available to the Board of Directors for consideration. It would be premature to consider making any firm commitments to changes in the actual bus stops, until such time as the funding has been increased to allow for expanded hours. Two possible locations for the bus shelters is identified later in the report, as well as possible changes to the existing bus stops.

About Antigonish Community Transit

The Antigonish Community Transit Society (ACTS) is a non-profit, charitable organization that began in 2010 as a working group of the Antigonish Poverty Reduction Coalition (APRC). It was focused on exploring transportation options available to residents of the Town and County. In October 2013, it formed a society governed by a volunteer board of directors and began a pilot project in September 2014. By March 2015, it became a permanent transportation service offering both a fixed bus route and a Book-A-Ride service. Since then, it has received continued support from the Province of Nova Scotia, the Municipalities of the Town and County of Antigonish, local businesses and community members.

The Antigonish Community Transit Society provides services to both the Municipality of the County of Antigonish and the Town of Antigonish.

The Antigonish Community Transit Society is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors who provide the overall strategic direction for the organization. The Board employs an Executive Director who runs the day-to-day business and operationalizes the strategic goals and objectives.



Public transit options should be available to all Canadians, no matter where they live. Expanding the capacity of the Antigonish Community Transit Society to support our neighbours means that residents are not left isolated from essential services and can travel with ease within their community. The Government of Canada is committed to collaborating with other levels of government on infrastructure projects to improve communities."

The Honourable Sean Fraser, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and Member of Parliament for Central Nova, on behalf of the Honourable Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities

About Antigonish Community Transit

The mission of ACTS is to provide a green, sustainable, multi-faceted, community-based transit strategy that provides accessible, efficient, reliable and safe travel for all residents and visitors in Antigonish town and county.

The strategic priorities identified in the 2020 Business Plan for ACTS focus on eight key areas: accessibility, awareness, finances, governance, green initiatives, operations, outreach, and ridership.

However, due to Covid -19, ACTS, like many other organizations, has been challenged to make significant progress on identified priorities. Several of the objectives identified are still applicable and relevant to any proposed changes to the Fixed Bus Route, especially those related to financial awareness, outreach, and ridership.



Objective #1

To increase awareness of the transportation deficiencies within the Antigonish area through advocacy and public awareness meetings



Objective #2

To coordinate transportation services within the Antigonish area



Objective #3

To be environmentally conscious and aware of the impacts a transportation system can have on the environment



Objective #4

To respond to people's limited access to services, programs and community activities by facilitating more accessible, barrier-free, inclusive, efficient, reliable and safe transportation options for community members within the Antigonish area



Objective #5

To initiate a mechanism for effective management and fundraising to establish, operate and sustain the ACTS organization.

About Antigonish Community Transit

The Book-A-Ride service is one of 22 operated in rural communities throughout the province that provide affordable door-to-door transportation. The Community Transportation Assistance Program (CTAP) funding is managed within the Active Transportation and Community Transit Division of the Department of Public Works.

To support the Book-A-Ride service, ACTS receives an operating grant each year for \$85,580 based on a set formula. The formula provides a base amount allocated for population and service area population, a percentage based on the linear kilometers in the catchment service area and a percentage based on the population served.

ACTS receives an annual operating grant from both the County and the Town of \$45,000, applied to both services. A request for an additional increase of \$15,000 has been made for the 2023-2024 budget year.

In addition to receiving funding to undergo a review of the Fixed Bus Route, ACTS also received funding through the Government of Canada's Rural Transit Fund for \$984,388 and the Government of Nova Scotia, \$241,722, for a combined investment of more than \$1.22 million. This funding will allow ACTS to expand its fleet by purchasing two hybrid vans, an electric bus and support charging infrastructure to serve those in the town and county of Antigonish, including Paq'tnkek First Nation. It will also fund the construction of two bus shelters. The new vehicles and supporting infrastructure will enhance the existing fixed-route transit system and the bookable door-to-door transit service.



About Antigonish Community Transit

Book-A-Ride is service that is accessed mainly by seniors, persons with disabilities, and people with limited access to vehicles. Book-A-Ride services must be booked by 1 pm the day before the service is needed or on Friday before for service on Monday. It is offered mainly as a Monday-to-Friday operation between 8 am to 5 pm. However, they provide rides earlier in the morning and on weekends as needed. The fee structure is based on distance. One-way fares within the Antigonish town limits are \$3.00, trips up to 5 km are \$5.00, 5km to 15km are \$8.00 and over 15km are \$8.00 for the first 15km and .75¢ per km for each additional km.

Other one-way fares for local communities are as follows:

Heatherton/Bayfield – \$10.00

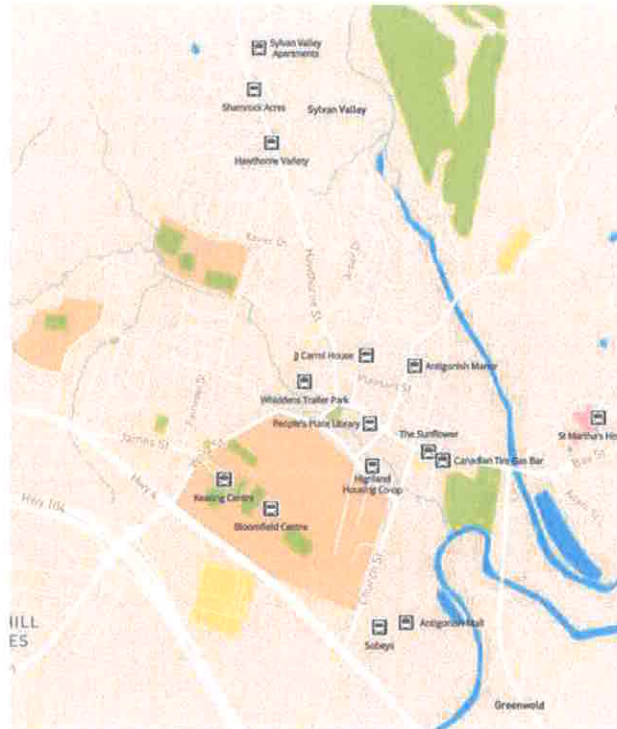
Pomquet/South Side Harbour – \$8.00

Monastery – \$12.00

Linwood/Havre Boucher – \$15.00

Anyone using the book-a-ride service can also take advantage of the Fixed Bus Route at no charge all day.

The service has had increased demand in recent years due to an aging population within the Antigonish Region. (Antigonish Community Transit Business Plan, 2020)



The Fixed-Flex Bus Route operates from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm hourly, Monday through Friday. Riders can request to be let off or flag the bus down anywhere along the route if it is safe for the driver to do so. The fixed route service is a 20.8-kilometer route providing service to throughout the Town of Antigonish, but also extends outside Town limits and includes stops in the County such as Walmart, Superstore, Shannex, The Maples and St Martha's Regional Hospital.

Fixed Route Fares (town routes)

One way – \$2.00;

Day pass - (Unlimited) – \$5.00;

20-day pass (Unlimited) – \$55.00.

Children under 12 ride for free.

Importance of Transit as a Social Determinant of Health and Quality of Life Issue

Transportation plays an essential role in the overall quality of life and is an important social determinant of health in rural communities. The availability of reliable transportation impacts a person's ability to access appropriate healthcare, purchase groceries, run errands, get to and from work, pursue educational opportunities, participate in social and recreational activities, and remain socially connected. Efficient, accessible, and affordable transportation is an important driver in economic growth in rural areas and helps ensure that people can obtain services and participate fully in their communities. The benefits of accessible, affordable public transit in rural communities are economic, social, and environmental through greenhouse gas emission reduction. It also helps to make communities more attractive to potential new residents and helps to attract potential employers.

While the Town of Antigonish is often considered a walk-able community for many residents, many others are not healthy, have mobility challenges, and must rely on family, friends, and transit to get around. Additionally, most residents live in adjacent communities outside of Town, which means that at present, only some residents residing in the County directly benefit from the Fixed Bus Route.

Reliable transportation options can determine whether many people in rural areas have access to healthcare, which is critical for promoting and maintaining health and preventing or managing illness. Often older individuals and individuals with disabilities have more significant healthcare needs than other rural residents, and living in rural areas isolated from healthcare providers can significantly impact their quality of life, their health, and their safety.

Population groups most likely to need a responsive and accessible fixed bus route to maintain their health and well-being include:

- Older adults
- People with disabilities or other health care needs
- Low-income individuals and families
- Students
- Newcomers



Importance of Transit as a Social Determinant of Health and Quality of Life Issue

One of the main challenges for people using a fixed bus route for healthcare appointments and to go to and from work is the need to match appointments or work hours with the bus schedule, which is often inconvenient.

Antigonish Community Transit and its' fixed bus route is an essential service that provides many health, social and environmental benefits. In the recent survey for the fixed bus route, 95% of respondents indicated that community transit plays an important role in your community's quality of life. It also helps to reduce economic disparities and improves equity in the community. Several factors contribute to many people living in rural communities requiring access to transit, such as age, health and mobility conditions, adequate income to own a vehicle, or those who choose not to drive. The Antigonish area also has a growing population of newcomers who access the fixed bus route. An enhanced fixed bus service can provide these populations an affordable and independent way to access jobs, employment, essential services and recreational or social opportunities.



Importance of Transit as a Social Determinant of Health and Quality of Life Issue

Using transit also contributes to improved mental health outcomes as it requires someone to walk to the bus, increasing physical activity and improving overall wellness.

The built environment influences ridership on community transit. The location of bus stops and the distance one must walk to access them, whether the service gives you access to the places you wish to go and if there are bus shelters in place to deal with weather conditions are all considerations for people while deciding if they will use transit. Residents with options that include convenience and comfort are more likely to choose a fixed bus route.

This focus on the quality of life is not a new conversation and access to transportation is a shared responsibility among the federal, provincial, and municipal levels of government. The roles of the federal and provincial governments are defined in the Constitution Act of 1867. However, the role that municipalities have in transit varies across the province. Since it is not a required essential service, cities can choose whether to provide public transit.



“Investing in public transit infrastructure will build strong communities across the country and deliver a better quality of life for all Canadians.”

“Canadians need good, reliable transit to get them to work on time in the morning and home safely at night.”

“When we invest in public transit infrastructure, we are supporting good middle-class jobs, creating better commutes, fighting climate change, and helping make life easier and more affordable for Canadians. We will continue to do what it takes to ensure our economic recovery from COVID-19 and build back a more resilient country for everyone.”

- The Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada

Snapshots of Other Fixed Bus Routes

While there are technically nine locations in Nova Scotia that operate some version of a Fixed Bus Route, Antigonish Community Transit is the only non-profit organization operating a one-hour, fixed bus route with 21 designated stops within the town core area. Other providers either are municipally owned and operated or run a different version of a fixed bus route.

Halifax Transit is owned and funded by Halifax Regional Municipality. It operates two ferry routes, over 60 bus routes (including the corridor, local, and express services), three regional express, and three rural routes. It also operates Access-a-Bus, a door-to-door para-transit service for seniors and persons with disabilities.

Transit Cape Breton is owned and funded by Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM) and operates bus routes in the urban core, which includes the communities of Sydney, Glace Bay, North Sydney, Sydney Mines, Reserve Mines, and New Waterford.

Kings Transit Authority operates buses in the Annapolis Valley. It is owned and funded by Kings County, Annapolis County, Digby County and the towns of Berwick, Wolfville, Kentville, Middleton, Annapolis Royal, and Digby.

Eskasoni Transit Service has a scheduled fixed-route service available Monday to Friday, offered twice daily. The driver will stop at five designated bus stops throughout Eskasoni to pick up/drop-off riders on a 20-passenger accessible bus that travels to six stops within the Sydney area. The cost is \$10.00 for a one-way trip or \$20.00 for the return trip. All services must be pre-booked at least 24 hours in advance.

Strait Area Transit (SAT) also runs the Inverness Fixed Route Monday to Friday. It also operates much the same as a Dial-A-Ride, requiring pre-booking 24 hours in advance. It travels the route at “fixed set times” between Port Hawkesbury and Inverness. The cost is \$7.50 one way (up to two zones within the service area) or \$15.00 within two zones in communities SAT serves.

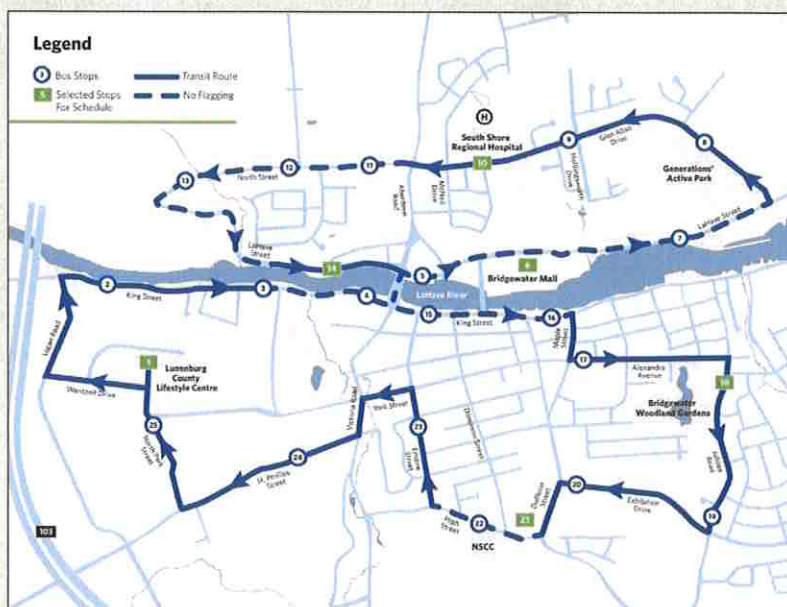
Snapshots of Other Fixed Bus Routes

Bridgewater Transit

The population of the Town of Bridgewater has approximately 8600 residents. Bridgewater Transit is a municipality-run transit system within the Engineering and Public Works Department. It began as a 6-month pilot project in September 2017, with donated buses from Halifax Transit; the pilot was then extended for an additional year. As of April 1, 2019, Bridgewater Transit became a permanent and core service of the Town. Since the buses have been operational, there has been tremendous growth in the transit service.

Bridgewater Transit completes a one-hour (16 km) loop of the Town with a single bus on a fixed route with 25 designated stops. In late 2020, the Town replaced the two start-up buses with two(2) 2020 Champion LF (2021 Ford E-450 Chassis), 19-seat capacity buses, including two wheelchair spaces. The hours of operation from Monday to Friday are 6 am to 8 pm, reduced to 8 am to 6 pm on Saturdays. The service day is approximately 14 hours and 240 km, reduced to 10 hours and 170 km on Saturdays. Sunday service was previously offered but discontinued due to low uptake. Bridgewater Transit uses a flag stop system, where it is safe to do so, along the fixed route, to meet the needs of the residents of Bridgewater.

The ridership has been consistent in the region despite covid, proving the importance of transit for the local community. The ridership ranges between 1500-3000 people per month, with an increase in the winter months. The municipality currently has casual and part-time bus drivers who are not unionized and are not eligible for benefits as they don't work full-time. The current wage rate for drivers is \$19.89.



Snapshots of Other Fixed Bus Routes

Bridgewater Transit

Fares have stayed the same since inception, costing \$1.50 for students and youth, \$2.00 for adults, a 10-ride adult pass is \$18 and \$13.50 for students. They also provide an unlimited adult monthly pass for \$45 and \$30 for students. Most riders in the area use the bus to run errands and commute to work or school outside peak hours. Other trip purposes include tutoring, church, evening classes, and going to the Lunenburg County Lifestyle Centre (LCLC). While the service is essential for the entire town, the three groups who use the service the most are people who have difficulty getting around, youth, and seniors.

The transit system is a line item in the municipal annual operating budget. The annual operating costs in 2022- 2023 were \$73,428, and salary costs were \$172,065. They access grants such as the public transit assistance program. Additionally, the transit has gained significant support within the municipality, wherein engineers and community development associates work closely to make the system efficient. The biggest strength of the municipality-run transit is that it is considered a service for the municipality, and the operating costs are part of the annual operating budget, which ensures financial stability. The municipality views transit as a quality-of-life issue for all its residents.

One of the reasons for the success in ridership is connected to a strong marketing campaign when the fixed link was launched.



Snapshots of Other Fixed Bus Routes

Pictou County Transit Corporation

The Towns of New Glasgow, Trenton, and Stellarton have a combined population of about 15,000 residents. Pictou County has a long history of transit in the region dating back to the early 1900s when a tram service and later a bus service ran under the Pictou County Electric Company. Pictou County Regional Transit Authority began around 1980 for New Glasgow, Trenton, and Westville and ceased operations in 1996 due to funding issues.

During these years, a door-to-door pickup service was carried out by the Central Highlands Association of the Disabled Transit (CHAD). Still, residents identified a need for a more agile service in the region. Pictou County Transit (PCT) has since revived itself, and CHAD conducted a feasibility study and a business plan in 2015 and 2016. As the initiatives started coming together, the PCT fixed bus route system became a co-run initiative between the Pictou County Transit Corporation and CHAD; CHAD takes care of the management. PCT's three-year pilot project launched on May 17, 2021, in the midst of a COVID lockdown. People were using the bus to get to work, medical appointments, and grocery shopping. The Province of NS supported the implementation of the transit system by buying a bus for the community for \$190,000, and they also fully funded the first year of operations at \$200,000. Pictou County Transit completes a one-hour loop between New Glasgow and Stellarton.

The hours of operation from Monday to Saturday are 7 am to 9 pm. Pictou County Transit has nine fixed bus stops and uses a flag stop system, where it is safe to do so along the fixed route to meet the needs of the residents. More than 70% of the route is flaggable.

The ridership has been consistent in the region even during Covid, proving the importance of transit services for the local community. The ridership averages 435 people per week, with higher uptake in the summer and fall months. The municipality currently has two full-time drivers who are entitled to the benefits of municipal employment. Their current wage rate is \$17.75 per hour and is expected to go to \$20.00 in April.

The bus service fares are \$3.00 per ride and \$7.50 for a day pass. They also provide monthly passes of \$70 for adults, \$60 for students, and \$40 for youth. Most riders in the area use the bus for transit to service-related jobs, running errands, and commuting to work or school outside peak hours. The PCT bus is fully accessible and equipped with a modern ramp and low floor. CHAD provides a backup bus as required as part of its management agreement. The bus has a debit machine for ease of payment. Additionally, the bus is a Wi-Fi hotspot, so the riders can access the internet on their ride without using their data.

The total operating costs to run the service for 2023-24 are \$213,800, \$105,000 are wages, and CHAD is paid a \$20,000 management fee.

Snapshots of Other Fixed Bus Routes

Yarmouth Transit

The Town of Yarmouth has a population of about 7,200 residents. Yarmouth Transit is a municipality-run transit system. It began in February 2017, with two buses, one operating at a time. The bus covers a 14.2 km route in 45 minutes. It has 17 fixed bus stops and a flaggable route that residents can use. The town currently has two 16-seat capacity buses.

Since the buses have been operational, there has been a tremendous improvement in the transit service. The hours of operation are Monday to Friday, 7 am to 7 pm, and Saturday from 8 am to 6pm. The ridership has been consistent in the region despite the Covid pandemic, proving the importance of transit for the local community. In February of 2023, with two service disruptions, ridership was 1250, as compared to previous years, pre-Covid, where ridership was 1900 in the same month. Ridership sees an increase in the winter months. The municipality has casual and two full-time bus drivers who are unionized and are eligible for benefits. Their current hourly wage is \$20.00.

The fares have remained the same since the introduction of the service. The costs are Cash for \$2, One-Pass for \$1.50, and a Monthly pass for \$50. They had other fare options. Including a day pass and unlimited weekly and monthly passes, which have been discontinued due to the crash of the smart card system. Their ridership grew year-over-year from 2017 at 55%, 2018 at 8%, and 2019 at 28%. In 2020, ridership decreased by 54% due to shut down of the service during the pandemic emergency measures, and there is now a slow return of users. In 2021 and 2022, ridership increased by 24% yearly from ridership participation in 2020. Most transit bus riders are seniors and lower-income adults living near senior housing and public housing units. One of the biggest strengths of the fixed bus service is the retention of the residents' quality of life. Since its establishment, the service has been consistent, with operational and budget costs being stable as well. However, drawbacks for the municipality are the high maintenance costs and driver attraction and retention. The 2023-24 budget projects annual operating costs to be \$206,000, with \$125,000 for wages and benefits.

A lot more opportunities exist for transit as the town has recently established a Transit Citizen Advisory Committee that will look at the future needs of the service to the community. As they are aging in place, the community sees the service as “essential” to them for their mobility, social interactions, and to help with budgeting finances. There is future scope to establish bi-directional buses running seven days a week and the route extended.

Snapshots of Other Fixed Bus Routes

Hinton Transit

The Town of Hinton is located in west-central Alberta, with a population of 9,800. Hinton Transit System is a permanent service for the residents of Hinton. The fixed bus route service runs six days a week throughout the community and arrives at each stop on the hour. The hours of operation are Monday to Friday, 8 am to 8 pm and on Saturday from 8 am to 6 pm. The bus currently does not offer service on Sundays or holidays. The bus can carry 12 passengers.

The Town of Hinton also manages the Freedom Express, a 12-passenger bus equipped with a lift and ramp for wheelchair users. Freedom Express is the door-to-door, accessible, shared-ride transit service for Hinton residents who cannot use regular transit for some or all trips due to a physical or cognitive disability. This service is also available for children with disabilities who qualify. The service may be used for school, work, therapy, medical appointments, all senior programs, and social and shopping trips.

The fares are \$3 for a single ride. They also offer a day pass for \$8, a monthly pass for \$70, and a 12-ride punch card for \$30. Additionally, they offer a quarterly senior pass for \$50. The 2023 annual operating budget for Hinton Transit is \$362,185, which includes both services.

Yorkton Transit

Yorkton is a small city in south-eastern Saskatchewan; it has a population of 16,738 (2022). Yorkton Transit provides safe, reliable, and affordable transportation based on two distinct scheduled, fixed routes, the North and South Lines. Each route is a 30-minute loop, with the bus switching routes. The service operates from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Monday-Friday, and from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Saturdays. The fixed bus route is not available on Sundays or holidays. The fleet is comprised of two buses that are fully accessible.

A single fare is \$2.50 for children under 18 years and students with IDs and \$3.50 for all others. A book of 30 tickets is \$62.50 for those under 18 and students and \$87.50 for all others. Monthly passes are \$37.50 for under 18 and students, \$75.00 for adults 18-60, \$60.00 for adults 60 plus and \$25.00 for low-income.

The annual operating budget for Yorkton Transit is \$449,400, which includes contract fees to SaskAbility to provide the accessible service.

The Connection Between Transit and Age-Friendly Communities

The concept of age-friendly communities has become increasingly important in recent years with an aging demographic. Atlantic Canada has the highest proportion of older adults per capita, more than any other region in the country (Statistics Canada, 2022). Nova Scotia also has the highest rates of disability, greater than any other province in Canada, with over 40% of older adults with at least one disability (Statistics Canada, 2017). Antigonish Town and County is no exception, with 24% of its population 65 years and older and 39% over 55 years old. (2021 Census Data)



In rural communities like the Antigonish region, access to transportation is vital for older adults to age in place and lead full and active lives.

Many older adults who live in rural communities do not reside close to many essential services like grocery stores and health services. The Antigonish Ageing Well Coalition was recently involved in a research project funded by the Change Lab Action Research Initiative (CLARI) in partnership with Dr Adam Perry in the Faculty of Education at STFX. The purpose of this project was to engage adults 55 years and older to get their views on the needs, strengths, opportunities, and challenges to the Antigonish region becoming an age-friendly community. The survey had 307 respondents.

The project also involved ten interviews with stakeholders who represented the eight domains and (2) two conversation circles with 30 older adults in which experiences related to the eight domains were discussed (30 participants). As noted above, one of the eight domains for an age-friendly community is transportation, and this research project provided some important insight relevant to this project. Additionally, many of the other domains for an age-friendly community have a strong connection to transportation to access services, feel socially included and be able to participate in the community.

Eight domains of an age-friendly community



The Connection Between Transit and Age-Friendly Communities

Transportation was identified as a significant barrier to the Antigonish region becoming an age-friendly community and was recognized as a key area to focus attention, especially for those older adults who experience social isolation due to a mobility disability. Because there are limited public transportation options, older adults must rely on private transportation. Participants highlighted the inconvenient hours of the Antigonish Community Transit system, the limitations and inconvenience of booking Dial-a-Ride services by 1 pm the day before, and the increasing cost of taxis in the town and county. While Antigonish Community Transit does have a fixed bus route from 9 to 5 pm weekdays and does have an accessible vehicle, the lack of access to accessible transit during evenings and weekends is especially challenging for older adults with disabilities, as during these times they may be reliant on ambulance services or other privately organized transportation to access to medical and other services.

While several interviewed stakeholders and session participants agreed that the transit provided was an essential service, the issue of limited access was identified as negatively affecting their quality of life and was reducing access to necessary services, such as groceries and medical appointments.



“Older adults with disabilities are trapped in their homes. They can’t go out at night because there’s no transit. They have to take an ambulance sometimes to the hospital because there’s no transit.”

- Anonymous respondent



“If you don't have a vehicle here, or a family to take you around, you're really out of luck. One of the big things with the public transportation that exists currently is that it's only available from nine to five. So, you couldn't go anywhere in the evening. It's difficult to be spontaneous.”

-Anonymous respondent

Ridership

At present, the majority of people who access the Fixed Bus Route are older adults, persons with limited income, and newcomers. There is little student uptake, and due to the limited hours, the fixed bus route does not attract employees requiring transit to and from work. With an aggressive marketing campaign, there is significant potential to increase ridership and attract new demographics as passengers. Recorded ridership shows the number of one-way fares in that month and does not capture the number of actual users. These numbers show very low overall use of the fixed bus route in Antigonish, even though it has been in operation for nearly ten years. The revenue generated through the fixed bus route fares only represents about 14% of the actual expenses to run the service. In 2022-2023 the expenses were \$71,000, and the revenue was \$9,591. This effectively means it needs to be subsidized annually by \$61,500, which is 86% of the annual operational costs, with the current hourly rate of \$16.00 for bus drivers and no increase in hours. So effectively, running a fixed bus route service is far from a break-even operation. It presents a challenge for the long-term sustainability of a not-for-profit organization that relies on different levels of government funding for its operations. The last three years have proven challenging to determine whether ridership has grown as Covid -19 has caused significant variations and discontinuity in the data. For comparison purposes, the two years included in this report are taken from ridership data collected the year before Covid and from the past fiscal year. Comparing data from the two years in between these years, would not provide an accurate picture.

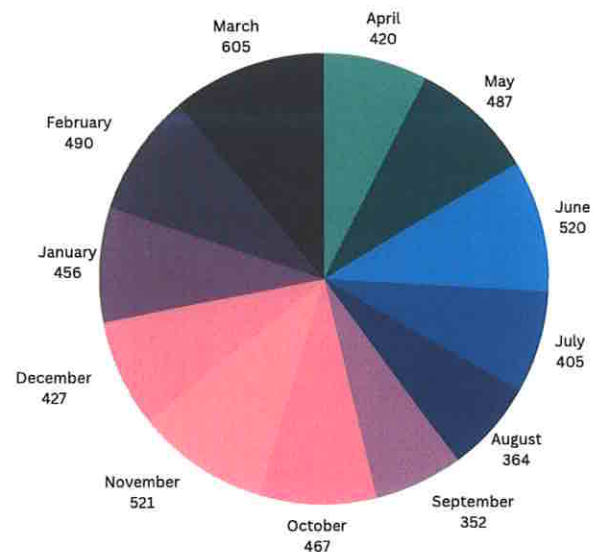
The revenue generated from the fixed bus route cannot be a big factor in evaluating the importance of this service

2019-2020 revenue was \$8,695, with a total ridership of 5,021.

2022-2023 revenue of \$9,591, with a total ridership of 5,514.

The two-year comparison does show a steady increase recovery from two years with low ridership due to Covid-19 restrictions. March 2023 saw the highest ridership numbers at 605. Of interest is the slight rise in February and March, and then in April (630) and May (631) which also coincides with a great deal of social media coverage and press coverage related to both the survey in February and community consultations held in March.

2022-2023 Total Ridership of 5,514



The overall increase when comparing these two years shows an increase of about 10%. This could be attributed to the promotional efforts and a higher awareness of the fixed bus route.

Antigonish Community Transit Board of Directors SWOT Analysis

Completed on February 21, 2023

STRENGTHS

- Ten-year history of providing transit services in the Antigonish region
- Executive Director and staff
- Committed volunteer board
- Bus Drivers who are willing to work for a low hourly wage
- Funding for a new electric bus
- Financial support from both Town and County to support operations - 45K each
- Core funding for the Book-A-Ride service from Province
- Donation from Sisters of St. Martha's

WEAKNESSES

- Cost to run service far exceeds income generated from fares
- Low ridership on Fixed Bus Route
- Bus leaves the road for stops and is therefore not as a visible or regarded as an essential service
- Risk of staff turnover due to low hourly wages and part-time positions
- Lack of awareness of both services, especially fixed bus service
- Poor Signage - No bus shelters
- Little to no financial support for a fixed bus service
- Limited hours of operations for both the fixed bus route and Book-A- Ride
- No weekend services for either service
- Fixed Route is located Town not very relevant to County residents
- Departure of the current staff and Executive Director retirement next year
- Cannot pay drivers a living wage due to limited revenue

THREATS

- Risk of reduction in funding provided by the province and the two Municipalities
- Competition for volunteers for the Board of Directors with other worthwhile community organizations
- Staffing challenges due to a lower hourly wage and competition with higher wages offered by the Strait Regional Center of Education
- Rural transit providers are governed under NS UARB regulations and some of these rules can be a barrier to providing transit for clients.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Work on positioning transit as an essential service for the local region and economy
- Develop a strong marketing campaign to promote the services and increase awareness and ridership
- Stronger relationship with STFX, potential to build a more comprehensive service and look at funding through student fees
- Stronger relationship with NS Health
- Stronger relationship with the Antigonish Chamber of Commerce so transit can be considered a viable option to travel to work
- Sponsorship from businesses for extra bus services for special events or outside bus service
- Sponsorship and advertising opportunities on the outside of the bus and bus shelters

Note: Strengths and weaknesses are internal factors related to the organization, threats and opportunities are external considerations.

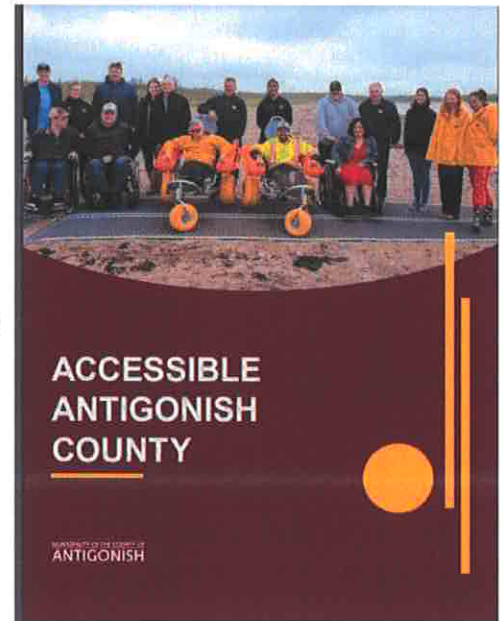
The Connection Between Accessibility and Community Transit

More and more research in recent years demonstrates the strong connection that social participation has to achieve better health outcomes. We also know that social participation tends to have a particularly noticeable effect on the health outcomes of older people and persons with accessibility issues.

The legislation for Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act mandates the development of Accessibility Advisory Committees and Accessibility Plans for Municipalities and other public sector bodies within the province. The five areas addressed in municipal plans include awareness and education; goods & services; information & communications; transportation; employment; and the built environment.

The Town of Antigonish and the County have both identified the need for accessible transportation as an important priority in their plans and have also identified the need for ensuring specialized transit services (door-to-door service). In addition, through their plans, they have committed to supporting accessible transportation options. Both Councils strongly support public transit and provide funding for their annual operating budget as a grant to Antigonish Community Transit.

During the Accessibility Planning Engagement phase for the Town, many stakeholders reported transportation as a key challenge for community members, especially for groups who are less likely to own a vehicle, including people with disabilities, low-income households, and newcomers. While both transit services offer wheelchair-accessible vehicles, stakeholders and transit operators identified many accessibility concerns, such as securing wheelchairs on ramps and buses, leading to second-hand reports of injuries. Transit operators indicated that addressing some of these gaps is necessary to increase ridership while increasing ridership is necessary to access additional funding. Some users who require assistance getting on and off vehicles and attending appointments do not have access to a support person, leaving the responsibility to drivers who are not trained and equipped to assist with this.



Town of Antigonish Accessibility Plan
Draft, Summer 2022

In addition, the Town Council identified exploring a parking strategy with St. Francis Xavier University to reduce the number of automobiles driven to the university by students living off-campus. The Town will seek to improve public transit towards this end. Town Council also identified park-and-ride lots and other opportunities to reduce the need to own a personal vehicle, which could be an additional way to improve employee transit and expand the Fixed Bus Route.








Highlights of Survey Findings

The online survey was live from Feb 2nd until the end of February. Following the removal of about 30 “bot” surveys, there were 404 online responses and 44 hard copies. Throughout February, weekly social media posts were shared on the ACTS transit Facebook page and also shared by many community partners to help promote the survey. [The video featuring Marilyn McLellan, released on Feb 13th to promote the survey, was shared 14 times and viewed nearly 800 times.](#)

Weekly draws for the grocery gift cards were held for survey respondents to encourage more responses.

Although printed copies were available at the following locations Antigonish Library, Antigonish Community Transit Offices and on all Vehicles, Town of Antigonish Municipal Office, Antigonish County Municipal Office, and the Antigonish Women’s Centre, only 44 print surveys were returned.

Content			
	Create a post	Last 90 Days	Post reach
 Participate in the survey by clicking on the following link and enter your name into a weekly draw for a \$50.00 Grocery card https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GQJ8K5P Thu, Feb 7		Post reach: 6,794 Engagement: 518	Boost post
 A reminder of our Volunteer Fair taking place Tuesday January 17th at the People Place Library, 12 to 1pm and again from 5 to 6pm. Can you spare a few hours for a local community group? Thu, Jan 12		Post reach: 2,199 Engagement: 111	Boost post
 If you want to attend a community session, please RSVP so we know numbers and can plan refreshments. Sat, Feb 23		Post reach: 2,152 Engagement: 82	Boost post
 A reminder that we are having a Free Ride week on the fixed route starting tomorrow. Don't forget to fill out the survey for a chance to win a \$50 grocery card. Mon, Feb 19		Post reach: 1,972 Engagement: 49	Boost post
 Participate in the survey by clicking on the following link and enter your name into a weekly draw for a \$50.00 Grocery card https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GQJ8K5P Tue, Feb 21		Post reach: 1,923 Engagement: 68	Boost post



PARTICIPATE IN OUR SURVEY
Month of February

Are you a resident of the Town of Antigonish or Antigonish County?

We need your input to help shape the future of the bus route!

Weekly draws to win a \$50 grocery gift card

If interested, scan the QR below or link to access the survey
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GQJ8K5P>

In addition to weekly posts on the [ACTS Facebook \(FB\) page](#), other requests for support for social media promotion were sent to the following:

- All board members
- Municipal Councillors on the Board to share with other councilors on their FB pages
- NS Community Transit Network and Rural Transportation Association
- Antigonish Coalition to End Poverty, Antigonish Kids First, Antigonish Community Health Board, ACALA
- Town and County Staff
- STFX Student Union and STFX Student Services
- Antigonish Chamber of Commerce
- Rural Communities Foundation of NS
- 98.9 XFM, 101.5 The Hawk, The Reporter

Highlights of Survey Findings

Email requests asking for several partners to promote the survey were shared by the following organizations: Antigonish Aging Well Coalition, Keep Well Antigonish, CHB Contacts, Antigonish Coalition to End Poverty, and the Antigonish Women's Centre List Serve.

The overall response to the survey was excellent and provided valuable feedback on residents' views on the Fixed Bus Route. This information is essential for the Board of Directors to consider when making any changes in the future.

Highlights of the Responses

- 448 people took the time to share their opinions.
- 60% of respondents do not use the Fixed Bus Route, demonstrating a great deal of growth potential with more awareness and an enhanced route.
- 95% of respondents agreed that community transit plays a role in the quality of life of a community
- 61.2% of respondents were employed, and 26% were retired.
- 72.7 % of respondents were women
- 40% or 170 of people that use transit use the fixed bus route
- 87% of respondents indicated they might be or would be more likely to use the fixed bus route if hours were extended
- 33% of respondents use transit because they have no access to a vehicle

Limitations

While there was an excellent response rate, many residents were likely unaware of the survey. Therefore, the results represent a select group of people during a window in time. The majority of these responses were for the online survey, and this format may not have been accessible to individuals who do not use social media, have internet access or do not have the computer literacy required to complete the survey. The option for completing a hard copy of the survey was limited to the locations listed above. In addition, most of the promotions were via social media and through the requests of partners to share information. Again, people who do not use social media may have been unaware that the survey was taking place. While 98.9XFM did promote the survey through free public service announcements, however, it would not have been helpful for those who do not listen to that radio station.

An additional and noteworthy limitation of the survey results was that we were unable to capture significant information from people who identified as Indigenous, African Nova Scotian, and other racialized members of our community, including newcomers. This is important information as we know that transportation contributes to barriers related to the social and structural determinants of health (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2022)

Antigonish Community Transit: Fixed Bus Route Survey



Who did we hear from?



Education Completed

45% of the respondents had a college education

27.3% of the respondents are a postgraduate

23.7% of the respondents are a high school graduate

72.7% of the respondents were women

24.8% of the respondents were men

2.5% of the respondents were Non-Binary, Two-Spirited, or Prefer Not to Say

95%

Said community transit plays an important role in your community's quality of life.



Of respondents had used the Antigonish Community Transit previously



Of respondents who had not used the Antigonish Community Transit previously

88.8% English is their first language

11.2%

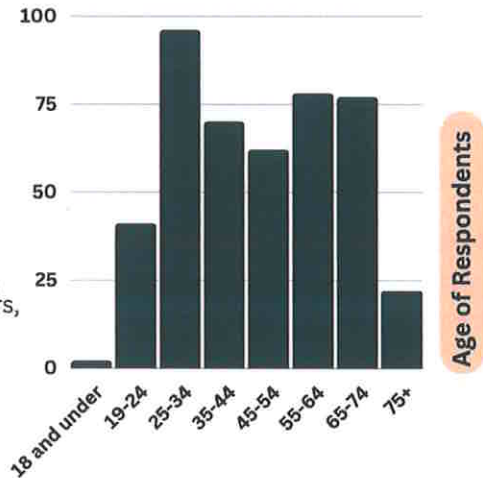
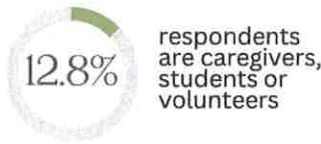
English was not their first language

Where do they live?

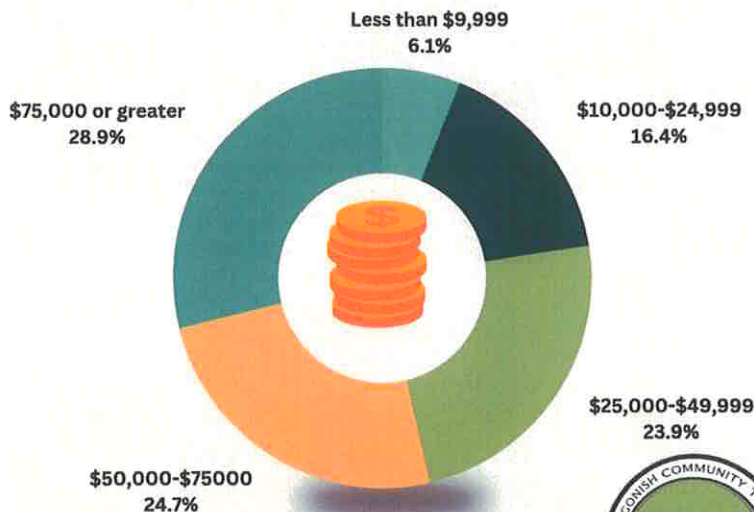


Municipality of the County of Antigonish 49.2% Town of Antigonish 50.8%

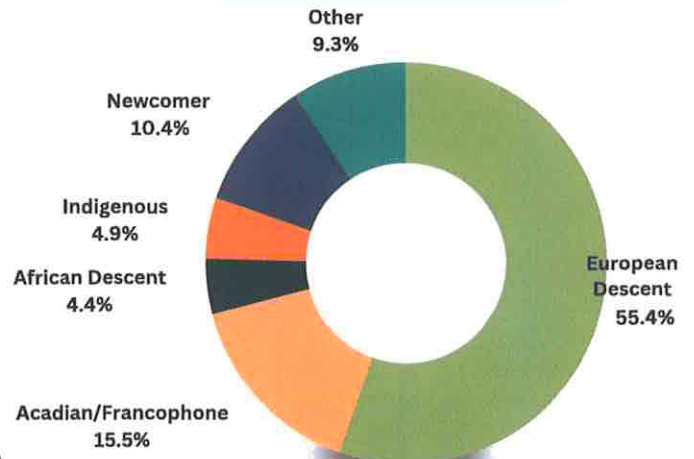
Current paid or unpaid work status



Household income



Ethnic/cultural background



Antigonish Community Transit Fixed Bus Route Survey

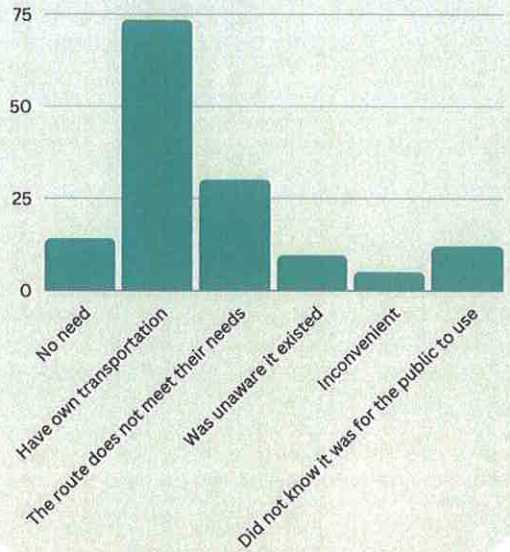
60%

of people surveyed do not use the fixed bus route

If the hours were extended, would they be more likely to use?



Why do you not use the fixed bus route?
Respondents checked all that applied

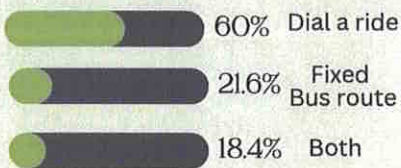


40%

of survey respondents said they used Antigonish Community Transit; this is what they shared

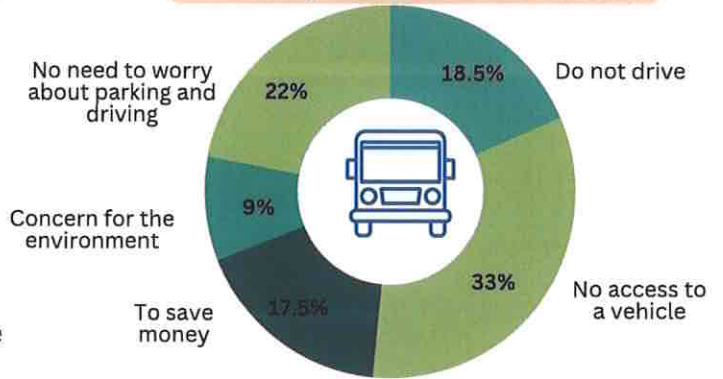
"There is a need for better promotions, marketing and visible signage."

Services used



170

Primary reason to use bus service

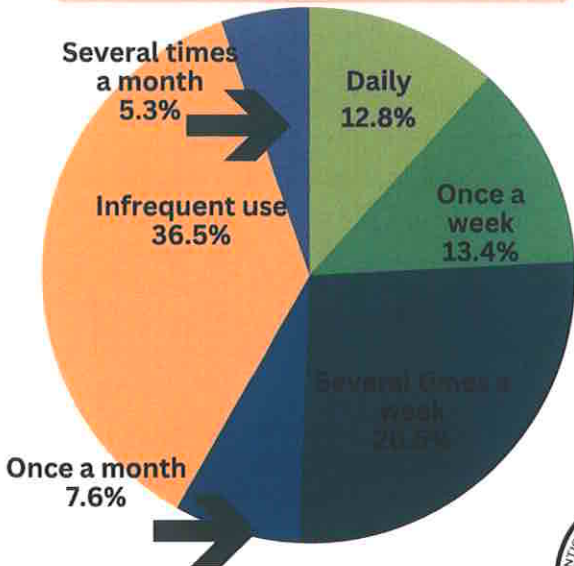


54%

Respondents said a small fare increase would impact their using the bus



How often they used fixed bus route



Overall Satisfaction - 1 being poor, 5 being excellent



75%

Are you aware the bus route has a flex option to flag down the bus on the route?

75% said Yes
25% said No



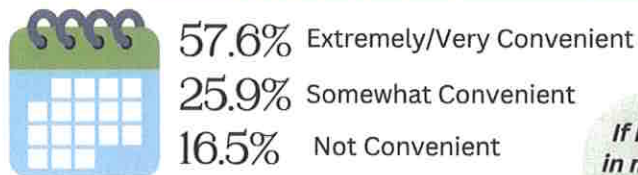
Antigonish Community Transit Fixed Bus Route Survey

What people use the bus for?

- 58.2% Errands/shopping
- 23.5% Access to food
- 22.4% Medical appointments
- 30.6% Work
- 15% Recreation/social activities
- 8.8% Education/training

"There is a need for more frequent bus service and extended operating hours, especially during the evening and early morning, to cater to healthcare workers and others."

How current users rated the 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. bus schedule



If hours were extended in morning and run later, would you be more likely to use?

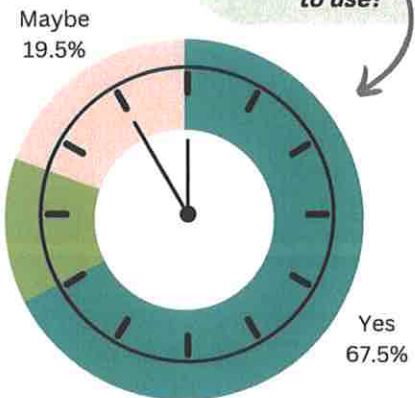
Accessibility and mobility

- 40% of respondents communicated that accessible signage, seating, and path to access the bus was important to them.
- 45% of respondents expressed overall safety as important.
- 85% of respondents using a mobility device, agreed that the current stops safely accommodate their needs.

Current users' interest in Saturday service

Saturday

- 76.9% Yes
- 4.7% No
- 18.4% Not Sure



13.5%

of respondents did not know where the location of the closest bus stop was to their home.

Antigonish Community Transit Town Bus Schedule - Monday to Friday

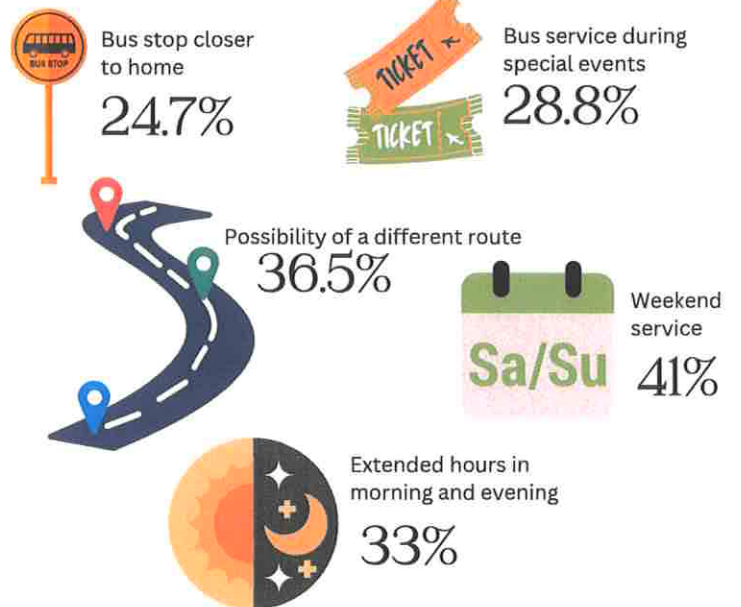
Timing is approximate and dependent on traffic

Bus Stop	9:00	10:00	11:00	12:00	1:00	2:00	3:00	4:00
Antigonish Mall	9:00	10:00	11:00	12:00	1:00	2:00	3:00	4:00
Highland Housing Co-op	9:03	10:03	11:03	12:03	1:03	2:03	3:03	4:03
Bloomfield Centre	9:05	10:05	11:05	12:05	1:05	2:05	3:05	4:05
Keating Centre	9:08	10:08	11:08	12:08	1:08	2:08	3:08	4:08
Atlantic Superstore	9:13	10:13	11:13	12:13	1:13	2:13	3:13	4:13
Walmart	9:14	10:14	11:14	12:14	1:14	2:14	3:14	4:14
Whiddens Trailer Park	9:20	10:20	11:20	12:20	1:20	2:20	3:20	4:20
Shamrock Acres	9:23	10:23	11:23	12:23	1:23	2:23	3:23	4:23
Sylvan Valley Apartments	9:25	10:25	11:25	12:25	1:25	2:25	3:25	4:25
Hawthorne Variety	9:27	10:27	11:27	12:27	1:27	2:27	3:27	4:27
JJ Carroll House	9:30	10:30	11:30	12:30	1:30	2:30	3:30	4:30
Antigonish Manor	9:32	10:32	11:32	12:32	1:32	2:32	3:32	4:32
People's Place Library	9:34	10:34	11:34	12:34	1:34	2:34	3:34	4:34
Canadian Tire Gas Bar	9:36	10:36	11:36	12:36	1:36	2:36	3:36	4:36
The Maples	9:43	10:43	11:43	12:43	1:43	2:43	3:43	4:43
Parkland (Shannex)	9:46	10:46	11:46	12:46	1:46	2:46	3:46	4:46
St. Martha's Hospital	9:50	10:50	11:50	12:50	1:50	2:50	3:50	4:50
The Sunflower	9:53	10:53	11:53	12:53	1:53	2:53	3:53	4:53
Sobeys	9:57	10:57	11:57	12:57	1:57	2:57	3:57	4:57

RATES	One Way Fare	Unlimited Day Pass	ACTS 20
	Town Route \$2.00	Same Day Only \$5.00	30 Unlimited Day Passes \$55.00

Book-A-Ride services also available for areas beyond the town route.
Call 902 867 0411 for more information.

Current users would like to see these changes



February 2023 Survey Results

Themes from Survey Comments

Driver and Service Satisfaction:

Several respondents praised the drivers for their excellent service and friendly attitude. There were also comments on the importance of transit services for seniors and the need for bus shelters or waiting areas..

“The transit service is wonderful. The drivers are so friendly and helpful and go out of their way to help individual people. I am very impressed with their kindness and skill. If you mention you have a need they treat people with dignity.”

- Anonymous survey respondent



“The transit service is needed especially by seniors.”

- Anonymous survey respondent



Route and Stop Improvements: Some respondents suggested the creation of new stops in areas where there are currently none, such as James Street, Appleseed Drive, Keating Court, Mount Cameron, old South River Road, and Greenwold Manor. Others recommended the addition of two shorter routes, splitting up the existing long route, and providing transfer options. There were also comments about the needs for more visible signage at stops and schedules posted at each stop to make it easier for riders to know where to catch the bus, as well the addition of bus shelters. Bus stops that require the bus to leave the main road for pick up result in lower visibility. More visibility would lead to more impromptu bus rides.

Special Services and Events:

Respondents suggested that transit should work with the town and county to provide services to special community events, such as the Highland Games, and provide access to the beaches during the summer months.

Frequency and Schedule:

Many respondents mentioned the need for more frequent bus service and extended operating hours, especially during the evening and early morning, to cater to healthcare workers and other commuters. There were also comments about the need for better adherence to schedules and reducing wait times.

Communication and Promotion:

Some respondents mentioned the need for better communication and promotion of transit services, including information on routes, fares, and communicating the value of using the bus as a cheaper option than cars and taxis.

Highlight of Community Conversations

Considerable efforts were made to promote the community conversation sessions, including providing survey respondents with the opportunity to indicate their interest in attending a conversation session when completing the survey. Over 70 people responded that they were interested in attending the session; however, when contacted later for confirmation via email or telephone, it resulted in very few people attending. Promotional ads were developed for all general sessions, and targeted ads were explicitly generated for students.

These were circulated on social media, shared with key community stakeholders, including the Town and County municipal staff and sent to various email list serves to share. Student Services at STFX sent two separate emails to all students, one to have them participate in the survey and one to promote the sessions. Student sessions were held at STFX, and the other sessions were held in the Antigonish Community Library. The local radio station 98.9 XFM also promoted the survey and the sessions on air.

Five in-person community conversations were held on the following dates:

- March 6th for STFX Students
- March 7th, two General Public Sessions
- March 9th for STFX Students
- March 10th for Seniors (55 and over)
- An additional general session planned for the evening of March 14th was cancelled due to weather conditions.

PARTICIPATE IN THE FIXED BUS ROUTE REVIEW

Are you a resident of the Town of Antigonish or Antigonish County? We invite you to attend one of our upcoming community conversations to provide input to help shape the future of the fixed bus route.

SESSION DATES

Antigonish Library	STFX University
March 7th 11-12:30pm for General Public	March 6th 3:30 - 5:00pm for STFX Students
March 7th 4 - 5:30pm for General public	March 9th 6:30-8:00pm for STFX Students
March 14th 6:30 to 8pm for General Public	
March 10th 1:30 - 3:00pm for Seniors 55 years and older	

RSVP by Feb 28, 2023 to antigonishcommunitytransit@gmail.com

Attend a session and enter your name to win a \$50.00 gift card.

While the number of participants was considerably lower than anticipated and hoped for, the 28 attendees provided excellent input and feedback. The ACTS Executive Director attended all four sessions, and three board members attended three of the sessions. The attendees and their residence locations are summarized below:

- A total of six students participated (all residing in Town)
- 13 community members (Seven residing in Town and six in the County)
- Three Town Councillors and One County Councillor attended the general sessions
Nine seniors attended the community sessions (Six residing in the Town and three in the County).

It is important to note that during the community conversations, at times, some people confused the Book-A-Ride service offered with the Fixed Bus Route, and while we did remind them the review was of the fixed bus route, we also captured some of the Book-A-Ride feedback as well.

Highlight of Community Conversations

"Access to transportation, like housing it should be considered a basic human right."

- Participant quote



Students at STFX University weigh into the discussion about the Fixed Bus Route for Antigonish.

Signage of Bus Stops and Posted Schedules

Many responded that the signage for the bus stops and schedules was either non-existent or insufficient to draw attention to the bus route in Antigonish. In the few locations where signage exists, the comments were that it is not highly visible.

Bus Leaving the Main Road for the Stops

Several people commented that the bus leaving the main road reduced its visibility and also meant it was not viewed as an essential service operated for the Town. This is especially true along the main street, where there is the added impression that the stops were only designed for certain groups, such as seniors. Finally, it was noted that when the bus leaves the main road, it also takes more time along the route.

Hours of Fixed Bus Route Operations - Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm

The current hours for the fixed bus route are 9 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday, and these hours are only attractive to people who find it convenient during these specific periods. It does not encourage those who start work before 9 am or finish after 5 pm to use the system. Both the feedback provided during the in-person consultations and as confirmed through the survey from both users of the services and non-users all confirm that the current times do not contribute to people taking the bus.

Limited Monday to Friday service and no weekend hours means that people working during the week that would consider using the bus for errands during the weekend have no access at present.

In addition, the one-hour loop is a long time to be on a bus to get from point A to B in town.

Highlight of Community Conversations

General Awareness and Resident Knowledge of Transit

Overall, there is a general lack of awareness that a Fixed Bus Route is available in Antigonish. Even though this has operated for approximately ten years, many do not know the service exists unless they are bus users. This may be a result of many factors, and some that were highlighted during the community conversations include:

- They do not need to take the bus, so it is not on their radar
- They do not recognize that the smaller passenger bus has an actual bus route
- The route's location may not be visible enough to draw enough attention to the bus
- Even though it is promoted on 98.9XFM or Facebook, they do not listen to that radio station or do not use Facebook.

Ideas for promotion

Many ideas were put forth to help promote the bus. These ideas included:

- Targeted marketing messages for different demographics
- Promotion during STFX Orientation week
- Parking the bus in locations throughout the region could help to promote the fixed bus route service, not just at the mall with low exposure to other areas
- Park the buses at locations over Town to increase attention
- Put signage on the bus that is creative and tells a story
- Target marketing that would appeal to students, students tend to use Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp
- Large map and schedule on the buildings where there is a bus stop and also include in residences
- While ACTS has a Facebook page and website, unless you follow the FB page, you would not be likely to hear about it or the website
- Google Maps app for the route would provide easy access to information
- Physical bus shelters located in key traffic areas that are visible would be beneficial, especially if they were also used to promote events happening in the community.

Location of Bus Stops

Many people in both the in-person consultations and the survey confirmed that some of the existing locations for the fixed bus stops could be better located. Several locations are not visible, others are off the actual road and need protection in poor weather conditions. Others commented that with the Flag Down Option available, some less busy bus stops could be replaced with stops that are more likely to be used more frequently.

Several possible locations for stops identified include areas where there is a higher population of potential users, such as:

- Appleseed Drive, Antigonish Affordable Housing Development location, student housing, and the schools
- St Andrews's Street near the housing units
- South Side Harbour
- Greenwold Manor
- Keating Court area and Ponderosa Drive Area
- Greenhill Drive, near the trailer park
- Lower South River trailer parks

It was also suggested that if there were a couple of key locations, such as the mall and Walmart, where people could park and ride to take the bus to work or school, that would be ideal, especially given the parking situation at St. Martha's Regional Hospital and StFX University.

Highlight of Community Conversations

In addition, targeted consultations were held with the Antigonish Coalition to End Poverty members on March 13th, the Antigonish Community Health Board members on March 22nd, and staff with the Antigonish Women's Centre on April 4th. Through these sessions, we met with 21 additional volunteers and staff involved in providing direct client support and brought forward a broad perspective on community transportation needs. Much of the feedback gathered in these sessions was consistent with what we heard via the survey and the general sessions.

Access to transportation is an important social determinant of health that improves the quality of life. It is very costly to own a vehicle, and a more robust transit system will help to reduce barriers for many members of the population. The overall signage and general awareness are problematic, and people are not always aware that there is a bus route. Locations of the bus stops need to be closer to where more people would be likely to use the bus; for example, the two trailer parks in town, near public housing and affordable housing locations. The hours of operation also present challenges for many since it is only available 9 am - 5 pm, and this is not convenient for people using the bus to get to and from work.



Antigonish Town and County Community Health Board Members provide feedback on the Fixed Bus Route

A potential opportunity is to increase ridership by school-aged children of families that do not have a vehicle and could help with travel to extracurricular activities. Bus shelters would also be helpful and are needed in key locations to protect users from inclement weather. Saturday bus service is also required for people who work during the week and would like to use public transit for errands on the weekend.

Additionally, more STFX students could benefit from using the bus if they saw it as a viable option.

It would be great if there could be extended service to a couple of communities, such as the trailer parks in Lower South River, North Grant and on the #7, where many people would likely use the bus.

“For many newcomers, this is the only way they have to get to and from English classes at the library and to work.”

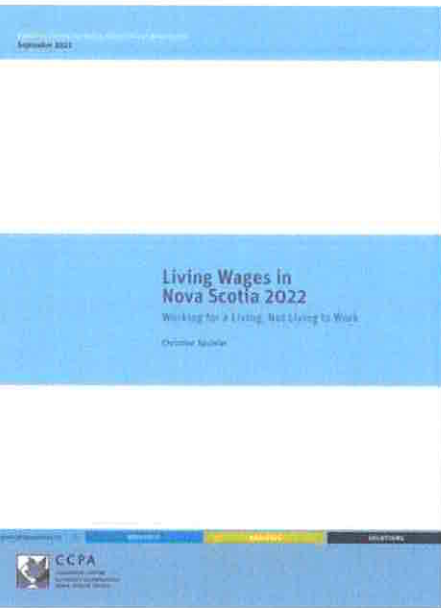
-Participant Quote

Cost Analysis Financial Assessment of Potential Changes to Hours and Wages

To attract and retain bus drivers, ACTS would like to be in the position to offer a competitive wage to all its' employees. At present, the ACTS hourly rate for bus drivers is \$16.00. Please see examples below of other wages.

Strait Regional Centre for Education
 Hourly Average Bus Driver Wage
 \$25.00 with full benefits

Northern Nova Scotia Living
 Wage Canadian Centre for Policy
 Alternatives
 2022 REPORT
 Hourly Living Wage - \$20.40



Pictou County Transit Corporation
 Municipally Owned and Operated
 Annual Budget - 2023-24 is \$213,800, \$105,000 for wages, and CHAD is paid a \$20,000 management fee.
 Hourly Rate for Bus Drivers – The wage rate in 2022 was \$17.75 per hour and was expected to increase to \$20.00 for full-time employees in April 2023.

Yarmouth Transit - Municipally Owned and Operated
 Annual Budget - 2023-24 budget projects annual operating costs to be \$206,000, with \$125,000 for wages and benefits.
 Hourly Rate for Bus Drivers- \$20.00

Town of Bridgewater - Municipally
 Owned and Operated
 Annual Budget - 2023-23 budget
 was \$245,493, with \$73,428 for
 operating costs and \$172,065 for
 salary costs.
 Hourly Rate for Bus Drivers - \$19.89



Cost Analysis Financial Assessment of Potential Changes to Hours and Wages

	Total Annual Operating Budget	Admin Costs	Hourly Wage	Total Annual Salary Costs With MERC Monday to Friday 9-5pm Service	Total Operating costs for current service Based on Hours of service	Projected Salary Costs with Increase in hours to 7 am to 7pm Monday to Friday service	Increased Hours Operating Costs based on hours of service	Saturday Service Wages for 8am to 2pm service	Saturday service Operating Costs based on hours of service
ANTIGONISH COMMUNITY TRANSIT COSTS BASED ON \$16.00 AN HOUR WAGE	\$85,000	\$25,000	\$16.00 Current	9 hours@ 230 days 2,070 hours \$33,120 \$3,312 MERC Total is \$36,500	\$27,450 Works out to \$13.26 an hour	13 hours \$ 16.00 230 days 2,990 Hours \$47,840 \$4,784 MERC Total is \$52,624 For an additional 920 hours of service	Projected operating increase for extended service based on an additional 920 hours \$13.26 an hour \$12,200	7 hours@ \$16.00 52 days 364 Hours \$5,824.00	Projected operating increase for Saturday service based on 364 hours @ \$13.26 an hour \$4,827.00
ANTIGONISH COMMUNITY TRANSIT SCENARIO BASED ON \$20.00 WAGE		\$25,000	\$20.00 Proposed is more inline with a Living wage for this area	\$45,540 MERC included	May change in future based on higher costs	\$65,780 MERC Included	May change in future based on higher costs	\$8,008 MERC Included	May change in future based on higher costs

Note - The total annual operating costs at 85K is lower than when totalling the projected salary costs in the table, the projections included costs for 230 days and the actual change based on number days that the bus runs. Both the actual salaries and fluctuation of actual costs for bus repairs, gas may vary.



Final Observations and Recommendations for the Future

Any changes to the Fixed Bus Route will have significant financial and operational considerations that will need to be carefully weighed to minimize hardship to riders, address community needs that have been identified and minimize potential risk for the organization.

There are three scenarios that can be considered by the Board of Directors for the future of the Fixed Bus Route.

Status Quo

The Fixed Bus Route remain the same, with a couple of minor changes to bus locations, the addition of the two bus shelters and the opportunity for growth with more visibility and marketing to increase ridership.

However, current ridership only represents approximately 10% of the overall revenue, which does not make the service feasible without substantial grant contributions from both municipal units. At present, the Province does not cover operating costs to support a fixed bus route operation. The current annual operating budget (without an increase in municipal grant contributions) does not have sufficient revenue to account for recent increase in expenditures because of higher gas process and the overall rate of inflation.

Other communities offering a similar service in Nova Scotia have operating budgets considerably higher than ACTS and the service is a line item in municipal budgets.

Unless there is a substantial increase to the funding provided by both municipalities, any identified changes in the hours are not possible and the long term future for a Fixed Bus Route offered by ACTS is at risk.

Final Observations and Recommendations for the Future

Fixed Bus Route Operate as a Municipally Run Service

While the research undertaken about the importance of transit and the input provided by the community clearly support the need for expansion and improvements to the route, there are significant economic risks for a non-profit organization like ACTS being the provider of a Fixed Bus Route.

For this reason, it is recommended that the Board of Directors begin discussions immediately with both Municipalities about the possibility of the Fixed Bus Route being operated as a municipal service. Given that ACTS is the only fixed bus route of its kind in Nova Scotia that is operated by a non-profit organization, this seems to make the most sense to ensure long term sustainability and growth of community transit in the Antigonish Region.

It should be noted that the unresolved consolidation between the Municipality of the County of Antigonish and the Town of Antigonish might have potential positive or negative implications for any immediate changes to the Fixed Bus Route and this could either delay or expedite the discussion.

For this reason, it is recommended that this proposal occur over a two to three-year period, which also allows for time to consider the introduction of the new electric bus to the fleet. If ACTS and the Municipalities can come to an agreement, it is recommended that they work together to come up with a three-year transition plan before all is completed, potentially beginning with an arrangement similar between the Pictou County Transit Corporation and CHAD Transit providing the management oversight for the first year with the view of the Municipality eventually assume operations. In the case of the CHAD business relationship this allows for the Pictou County Transit to also access one of CHADs vehicles as required.

Final Observations and Recommendations for the Future

Specialized Services Offered by ACTS

The third scenario includes the Municipalities taking on the responsibility to operate the Fixed Bus Route and ACTS continue to be the provider of the Book-A-Ride and offer specialized services, which is a bus service with specific target populations and communities. This would mean outreach could be provided to County locations on a weekly basis, such as St. Andrew's and Paqtnkek First Nation.

This could also include a park and ride program offered during peak work hours between 6:30 to 8:30am and 4:30 to 7pm route to offer the opportunity for STFX University and St Martha's Regional Hospital employees to use bus to assist with the parking situation. This could also include a route down main street to accommodate people who work in areas in the downtown core. Parking locations might include the Antigonish Mall and the Walmart.

It is recommended that ACTS approach Nova Scotia Health and STFX University to discuss a partnership in this service. A first step may be for both organizations to survey their existing staff to determine level of interest and then offer the service as a one-or-two month pilot and offer people an opportunity to see if this meets their needs. Future considerations might include the option to purchase a bus pass in the same way that can purchase parking monthly passes.

ACTS can also approach the Paqtnkek First Nation and the St Andrew's seniors housing to request they survey their residents to identify interest.

Final Observations and Recommendations for the Future

Key Considerations

In the interim while these discussions get underway, there are some incremental steps that can be taken by ACTS to improve the Fixed Bus Route for residents in the Antigonish region.

The planned up-coming retirement of the Executive Director for March 2024 will need to be taken into consideration when making any changes to the services provided by ACTS. With the Board of Directors not meeting during the summer months, it will be September before this report can be carefully reviewed and actions planned accordingly over a period.

Related to an expanded Fixed Bus Route is the recent announcement of the funding for ACTS to purchase of a new electric bus. Research will need to be completed to purchase of the bus, including where to place a charging station. The research must be completed by June of 2025. This is an excellent opportunity to collaborate closely with municipal partners to move forward with this project.

Recommendations

That the Board of Directors request a meeting with both Councils to present the findings of the review at the earliest opportunity available in the Fall.

That the Board of Directors come up with a plan to release the findings of the review to the community through local media, social media and also share the report with key stakeholders.

As recommended in the 2020 business plan, ACTS proceed with the development of a communication and marketing strategy to increase general awareness and knowledge of the fixed bus route. This will ensure all residents are aware of the availability of the Fixed bus Route and will help to increase ridership and fare revenue.

- Targeted key messages and actions are required to meet the needs of the different population demographics.
- A marketing campaign to all riders to promote the Flag Down option that is available may help to mitigate any changes on the regular route in locations where it is deemed more likely to be safe to do so.

Final Observations and Recommendations for the Future

- Consider a promotional blitz this up-coming fall for STFX students during orientation week by offering free bus service to that week to increase ridership. Ensure that the one of the buses is visible throughout the week, parking it at various locations throughout the campus throughout the week and driving the bus throughout the campus. This will require coordination with the University to seek permission and exemption from parking the bus in key agreed on locations. If funds are available consider hiring someone to assist with this campaign.
- That discussions begin with STFX University officials about the possibility of introducing an annual student fee being charged to on an annual basis that provides students with free access to the fixed bus route. This would help with the parking station by encouraging students to use transit instead. It could also potentially include adding on a couple of additional specialized services such a once-a-week grocery run.

- Proceed with the placement of bus shelters. Funding is available for five in total, this includes two approved approved through the 2025 Government of Canada's Rural Transit Fund. ACTS will need to work with Public Works with the Town of Antigonish to finalize locations and assist with this process to ensure the structures meet all requirements and plans are in place for on-going maintenance. Possible locations might include one on St. Ninian's Street, for a possible move of the stop behind Highland Housing Co-op, Bloomfield Centre at STFX and a proposed new bus location to replace Whidden's Trailer Park on Hawthorne Street and Pleasant Street.



- Meet with municipal staff in public works to discuss signage and timetables to be permanently affixed to all stops in locations where it is possible to do so. Also, discussions are required about the possibility of existing stops that currently require the bus to leave the road be looked at to determine the feasibility of this stop remaining on the road to both save time and increase visibility. This will mean that portion of the street will need to be blocked for bus traffic only and parking meters removed. There are locations where that is not possible such as Superstore, Walmart St Martha's Regional Hospital, Parkland, The Maples where it is necessary to leave the road for the bus stop.

Final Observations and Recommendations for the Future

- Make minor adjustments to the current route to allow for changes in locations can be done without a communication strategy being completed and approval by the Town and notification to the URAB.
- A proposed change to relocate the stop inside Whidden's Trailer Park to a stop closer to the intersection of Hawthorne Street and Pleasant. Relocate the Highland Housing Co-op to St Ninian's Street. Both these changes will reduce time and may allow for possible additional stops.

•Other changes to the two locations on STFX campus to include moving the current bus stop from the lower parking lot at Bloomfield Centre to the main road, Notre Dame Avenue and the route located at Keating Centre be adjusted to loop around West Street.



If additional funding can be secured, that ACTS consider offering extended hours and a Saturday service as a pilot project for a six-month period following a marketing campaign in advance. It is impossible to measure the uptake of the service if people do not know about it.

It is important to note that adding new additional stops that were identified during the consultation phase may result in other stops being discontinued. Minor changes to relocation of other stops might reduce time and allow for additions.

Possible new stops might include: Greenwold Manor, Appleseed Drive, Antigonish Landing (Tony's Meat area) and a location in the Keating Court/Ponderosa Drive area.

References

1. How Does Transportation Impact Health Research Oct-25-2012
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
2. Social Determinants of Health: The Canadian Facts (2nd edition, 2020)
by Dennis Raphael, Toba Bryant, Juha Mikkonen and Alexander Raphael.
3. Statistics Canada's Census Profile presents information from the 2021 Census of
Population - Antigonish, County (CTY) [Census division], Nova Scotia.
4. Antigonish Accessibility Plan Engagement Summary -UPLAND Planning + Design and
RHAD Architects
5. Town of Antigonish Accessibility Plan Draft, Summer 2022 - UPLAND Planning + Design
and RHAD Architects
6. Municipality County Antigonish Accessibility Plan March 2022



Antigonish Community Transit Fixed Bus Route 2023

COMMON
GOOD
SOLUTIONS

Antigonish Community Transit (ACT) is working with Common Good Solutions to review our Fixed Bus Route. We are interested in hearing your thoughts and ideas on the Fixed Bus Route offered in Antigonish to ensure our service is meeting the needs of our residents. Your opinions are important and all responses will only be reviewed by Common Good Solutions and will be kept confidential. The information gathered will be used to inform any changes we make to the fixed bus route, but will also provide us with important information on who takes the bus and who doesn't, which will help with any community outreach plans.

Please do not fill out this survey more than once. This survey is available online at or by scanning the QR code. Hard copies will be available on the ACT bus or any Book-A-Ride driver, and can be picked up and dropped off at the following locations: The ACT office at Market Square between 9:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m., Monday to Friday, Antigonish Library, Antigonish Women Resource Centre and both the Town of Antigonish and County municipal offices.

Thank you for your feedback. **Survey closes February 28, 2023.**

All surveys will be entered into a draw for a \$50.00 grocery card each week during the month of February. If you wish to have your name entered, please ensure you complete the bottom section.

Part A

1. Do you believe that community transit plays an important role in your community's quality of life?

- Yes No Not sure

2. Which age group best describes you?

- 18 and under 19-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65-74 75+

3. Where do you live?

- Town of Antigonish Municipality of the County of Antigonish

4. What best describes your gender?

- Female Male Non-Binary Two-Spirited Prefer not to say

Prefer to self-describe as: _____

5. What is your highest level of education?

- No formal schooling Elementary High School College e. Undergraduate ((University)
 Post-graduate (University)

6. Which of the following best describes you?

- Full-time employed Part-time employed Not employed for pay (volunteer)
- Caregiver (e.g. for children, grandchildren, or parents) Self-employed Student Retired
- Other (please specify): _____

7. Which of the following best describes your household income last year?

- \$0 \$1 to \$9,999 \$10,000 to \$24,999 \$25,000 to \$49,999 \$50,000 to 74,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999 \$100,000 or greater Prefer not to say

8. How do you describe yourself? You can choose more than one answer.

- European descent Acadian/Francophone African descent First Nation, Métis, or Inuit
- 2SLGTBQIA+ Newcomer (Immigrant/Refugee) Prefer not to say
- Other (please specify): _____

9. Is English your first language?

- Yes No If no, what is your first language? _____

10. Have you used Antigonish Community Transit?

- Yes No

11. If yes, what services have you used?

- Dial a ride Town Fixed Bus Route Both N/A

Part B

If you answered "Yes" to **question 10**, and picked either **option B** or **C** in **question 11**, please complete this page. If you **did not** pick either of these options please **skip to Part C** and **do not complete** questions 12–26.

12. How often do you use the fixed bus route?

- Daily Once a week Several times a week Once a month
- Several times a month Only used it a couple of times, infrequent use

13. The Fixed Bus Route operates Monday to Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. How would you rate this schedule?

- Extremely convenient Very convenient Somewhat convenient Not convenient

14. If the hours for Monday to Friday were extended beyond 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., i.e. start earlier in the morning and run later, would you be more likely to use the Fixed Bus?

- Yes No Maybe




15. Would you be interested in services offered on Saturday?

- Yes No Not sure

16. The following is the price for bus fare. While Antigonish Community Transit is committed to keep its fare low, would a small increase impact you using the bus?

- Yes, one-way fare, \$2.00 increased to \$2.25 Yes, unlimited day pass, \$5.00 increased to \$5.50
 Yes, 20 unlimited day passes, \$55.00 increased to \$60.00 Yes to all of the above

17. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent, how would you rate your overall satisfaction with the following?

					
Bus arrives on schedule	1	2	3	4	5
Location of bus stops	1	2	3	4	5
Hours for the bus route	1	2	3	4	5
Friendliness of driver	1	2	3	4	5
Current fare	1	2	3	4	5

18. What is the primary reason you use the bus service?

- Do not drive I do not have access to a vehicle Save money
 I am concerned about the environment No need to worry about parking and driving

19. What do you use the bus service mostly for?

- Errands/shopping Access to food Medical Appointments Work
 Recreation/Social activities Other (please specify): _____

20. What change if any, would you like to see to the fixed bus route? Check all that apply.

- A bus stop that is closer to my home Morning hours Weekend service Evening hours
 Bus service offered during special events, i.e. Highland Games, concerts, Canada Day, etc.
 Possibility of a different route, with other bus stops at certain times during the day
 Longer hours, currently operates on weekdays, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Please indicate suggested hours:

21. Do you know the bus stop that is closest to your home?

- I don't know the bus stop closest to my home Antigonish Mall Highland Housing Coop
 Bloomfield Centre Keating Centre Atlantic SuperStore Walmart Whiddens Trailer Park
 Shamrock Acres Sylvan Valley Apartments Hawthorne Variety J.J. Carrol House
 Antigonish Manor People's Place Library Canadian Tire Gas Bar The Maples
 Parkland (Shannex) St. Martha's Hospital The Sunflower Sobeys
 Other (please specify): _____

22. The following question will provide us with the important information related to accessing the fixed bus link when a person has an accessibility concern. We have a broad definition which includes all abilities such as physical, visual, hearing, mental health, intellectual, and learning.

To use the fixed bus route, what is important to you? Check all that apply.

- Accessible signage at bus stops Accessible path of travel to the bus stop Adequate lighting
 Seating Space to accommodate mobility devices Made to feel welcome
 Landscape that maintains visibility to and from the bus stop and it's signage Overall safety
 Adequate stop amenities, including connection information
 Other (please specify): _____

23. Are you aware there is a Fixed-Flex Route Option? (Riders can request to be let off or can flag the bus down anywhere on the route. The driver will pull over only if it is safe to do so and traffic is not impeded.)

- Yes No

24. If you use a mobility device, do the bus stops you use typically provide enough space and even ground to safely accomodate your mobility device while waiting for and loading onto the bus?

- Yes No N/A

25. I agree to have my name in for the draw for a \$50.00 gift card.

- Yes No

26. Are you interested in and willing to participate in a community conversation? In addition to the weekly draw, a \$50.00 grocery gift card will be drawn at each session.

- Yes No

Part C

If you answered "No" to **question 10**, and picked either **option A or D** for **question 11**, please complete this section.

27. Why do you not use the Fixed Bus Route?

- I have no need I have my own transportation The Route does not meet my needs
 Bus service is inconvenient Was unaware of the service Did not know it was for anyone to access

28. If there were new bus stops added to the existing route, would you be more likely to take the bus?

- Yes No Not sure

29. If the hours for Monday to Friday were extended, i.e. start earlier in the morning and run later, would you be more likely to use the Fixed Bus?

- Yes No Not sure Depends on the hours

30. I agree to have my name in for the draw for a \$50.00 gift card.

- Yes No

31. Are you interested in and willing to participate in a community conversation? In addition to the weekly draw, a \$50.00 grocery gift card will be drawn at each session.

- Yes No



Antigonish Community Transit Fixed Bus Route 2023

COMMON
GOOD
SOLUTIONS

Personal Information

PLEASE READ:

If you answered "yes" to attending a Community Conversation, please remove this last page from the survey, then **place the completed survey in the envelope labeled "Survey"**.

Then you may add your contact information on the additional page that has been torn away. When completed, **place this page in the envelope labeled "contact information"**.

Please make sure that you detach the completed survey from your contact information, so that we may maintain your anonymity.

NAME: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

Please indicate which session you would like to attend:

- Tuesday, March 7, 2023 at 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. for General Public at the Antigonish Library
- Tuesday, March 7, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. for General Public at the Antigonish Library
- Monday, March 6, 2023 at 3:30 p.m.- 5:00 p.m. for St. F.X. Students at the Council Chambers, 4th floor, Bloomfield Centre
- Thursday, March 9, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. for St. F.X. Students at the Council Chambers, 4th floor, Bloomfield Centre
- Friday, March 10, 2023 at 1:30 p.m. for Seniors (55+) at the Antigonish Library