

## Hornby Island

# Community Bus Project 2025

FALL, 2025

Report For: Comox Valley Regional District Authored by: Karen Ross

Hornby Island Economic Enhancement Corporation (HICEEC) & the Hornby Island Community Bus Steering Committee



[www.HornbyBus.com](http://www.HornbyBus.com)

October 23, 2025

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# Thank You's

The Hornby Community Bus project could not be undertaken without the dedication, determination, and passion of the Bus Steering Committee, helpers, riders, and drivers.

## **2025 Bus Steering Committee**

Peter Mills  
Garth Millan  
Gary Law  
Ray Therrien  
Chris Allen  
Steve Macdonald

## **Drivers:**

Jill Gathright  
Roman Hudson  
David Hayward  
Stu Brown  
Garth Millan  
Ray Therrien  
Steve Macdonald

## **HICEEC Administration**

Karen Ross  
Cam Domay  
John Heinegg, Board Chair

## **Volunteers/Friends of the Bus:**

Al Dickie  
Joann Kean  
Frances Millan  
Sam Elder  
Matt Dickie  
Michelle Easterly  
Henry Touwslager  
Paul Ackerson  
Goya Ngan  
Edward Kooij  
Kathy Mukai

## **Google Maps/Transit:**

Colin Stepney

Comox Valley Regional District, the taxpayers of Hornby Island, and local sponsors.



# SPONSORS

Hornby Island Coop  
First Credit Union  
Bradsdadsland Campsite  
J. Rubinoff Sculpture Park  
Sun Corona Cruises  
Mainroad Contracting  
Comox Valley Regional Dist.  
HICEEC



[www.hornbybus.com](http://www.hornbybus.com)

Thank you to our supporters

# A Successful Year

*“Who makes the wheels on the bus go round and round?”*

*“A great group of people working together to provide summer bus service.”*



Volunteer Bus Steering Committee and HICEEC staff

Cam, Garth, Peter, Karen, Ray, Steve, Chris and Gary

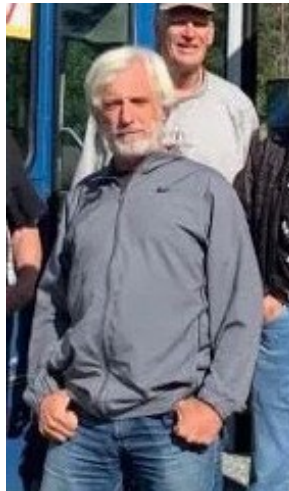


“Fluff ‘n’ Buff” semi-weekly cleanings, inside and out. At the Spark Maker Space.

Volunteers at the ready: Steerers Plus: Frances, Kathy, Joann, Sam, Paul, Henry, Michelle

***“Who makes the wheels on the bus go round and round?”***

***“Service, with a smile. Our drivers share the love.”***

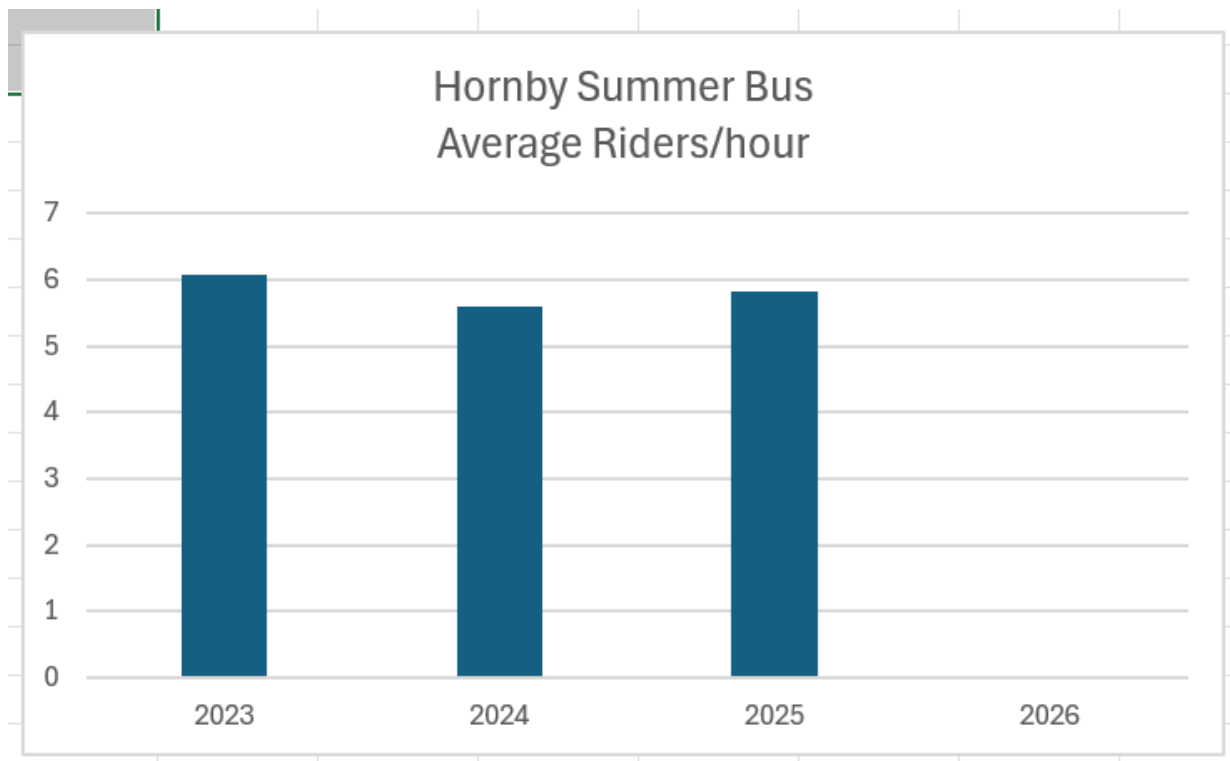


*Question: Who uses our Community Bus?*

*Answer: The BEST people!*

— feeling happy.





With 4337 riders in 2025, the service was considered a success. A modest increase in year over year ridership, after the 10% drop from 2023 to 2024. We continue to acknowledge driver error as a potential error factor in hand-counting riders on and off.

The approximate average of 6 riders/hour is considered acceptable for a rural environment.

In 2025, we dug down statistically and did a stop-by-stop analysis for a sample week in mid July and mid June.

The average, for midsummer (the busiest time of the year) was 9 riders/hour.

Ridership builds to mid July, and starts tapering off after mid August.

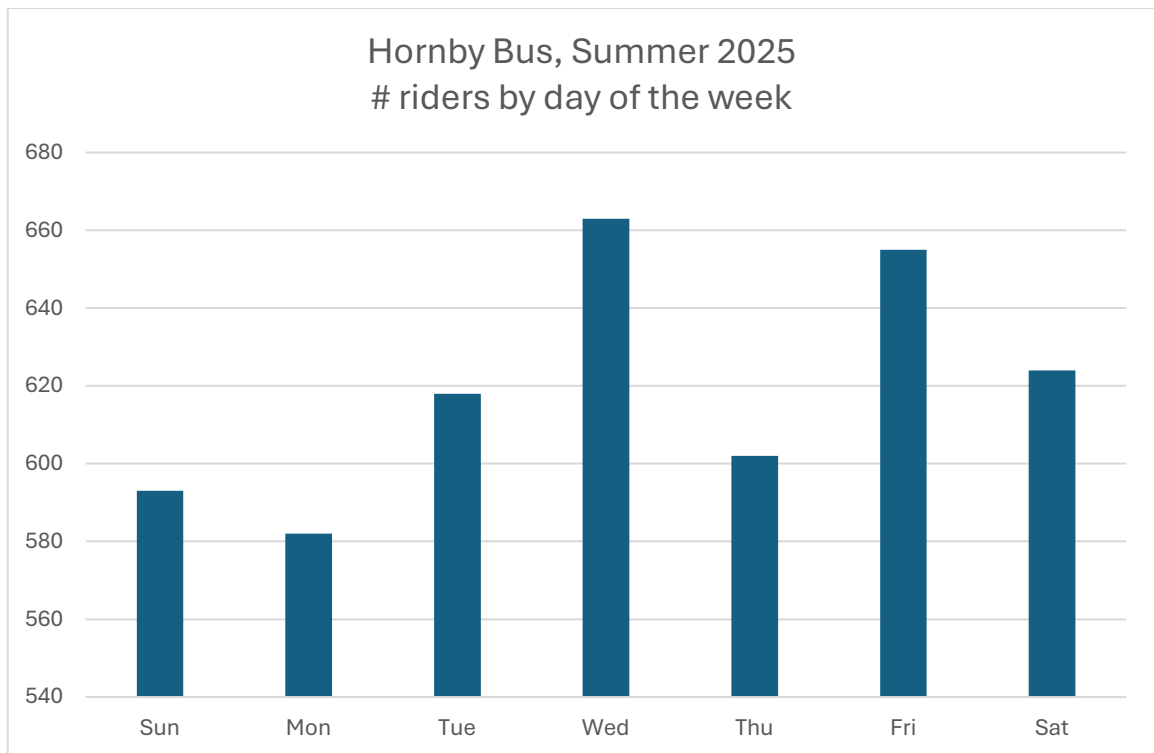
Ridership by day of the week is fairly consistent, between 582 and 663.



DAY	Sum of # riders
Sun	593
Mon	582
Tue	618
Wed	663
Thu	602
Fri	655
Sat	624

Total  
2025  
Ridership: 4337

In graph form, Wednesday is the busiest day, followed by Friday, and then Saturday:



# History

*Here is a quick recap of the work done since the completion of the 2019 pilot project. In 2020, the Tribune Bay Outdoor Education Centre turned over ownership of the bus to HICEEC, along with the corresponding book-keeping functions. A sincere thanks to the management there (the Campbell and Ortwein families) for their leadership since 2017 when the bus was first purchased.*

*After grounding the bus in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, supportive feedback from the community encouraged the decision to put COVID-19 mitigation protocols in place and get the bus rolling for the 2021 summer*

*season. A volunteer safety officer wrote the workplace safety manual, lined up the supplies and did driver training. A volunteer engineer designed and installed a plexiglass cage for the drivers, installed a sanitation station on the bus, and procured a P.A. communications system.*

*This work stood the bus in good stead, and these safety measures were implemented again in 2022. 2023 no COVID measures were implemented, but routine cleaning of the bus continued.*

*In the Fall of 2022, we said goodbye to our “Blue Bus” and sold it off to be used for storage.*



**CHAPTER 5 of the EDGY ELDERS TOUR**  
(photo Sept. 2022, end of The Blue Bus service)

*In the winter of 2022, Steering Committee members searched for a new-to-us bus in Vancouver, Tofino, Victoria and Seattle. After 6 months of looking for an affordable, suitable bus, (something a bit smaller to navigate the Hornby rural roads more easily and make the tight turns in congested areas), the team was getting close to desperation. The used vehicle market was both tight and expensive. We were fortunate to start discussions with the Tshaut First Nations in Port Alberni. They had a shuttle bus, with perimeter seating, listed for \$66,000. This 2017, 15 passenger, Microbird/Bluebird bus had only 14,500 kms on it, and a recently completed Commercial Vehicle Inspection (CVI). After lengthy discussions, a deal was struck for \$34,000. plus taxes, etc. We are grateful to the Tshaut First Nations for their spirit of sharing, they had bought the bus with a Grant, and it didn't meet their needs. Once acquired, our team set to work making a few modifications – removing the luggage rack, adding a camera, fare box, and standing straps. Public feedback on the bus, and the perimeter seating configuration, has been very positive.*



*The two biggest, ongoing, challenges to address for Summer Transit on Hornby are staff recruitment and lack of local workforce accommodations.*

*And the acquisition, maintenance, and storage of the bus itself.*

## Ongoing Operations

*Additionally, the Steering Committee Annual Operations “Template” includes:*

- *February: Advertisement placed in the annual Hornby Denman Visitors Guide, which is handed out at the Buckley Bay Ferry terminal to traffic coming through the booth, for both Denman and Hornby.*
- *Spring: Local sponsorships solicited, and associated advertising decals designed and placed on the sides of the bus*
- *Spring: Recruitment of drivers, professional training arranged and conducted. We open this training up to all members of the community, and are pleased that First Responders and Fire Service also benefit from the Instructor training we bring.*

*Spring: Volunteer Steering Committee members undertake the road training for new recruits, which follows.*



*First Class Driving Instruction, trainer Darryl, conducting driver training at the Hornby Firehall*

- Spring: Schedules refined, timed, & graphic designed
- Spring: Route maps refined & graphic designed
- Spring: The bus is taken into Courtenay for the Commercial Vehicle Inspection and to purchase the annual insurance. This involves several trips off Hornby dropping off, and picking up the bus, as it stays in the garage for this work.
- Pre-season: Bus stops maintained, with weed eating and a new schedule zap-strapped at each stop. The “green roof” on the shelter (fondly called “the Dickie Dugout”) at the Coop corner is maintained by volunteers. The plantings are looking great.
- Pre-season: New bus stops need posts and signage, designed and installed. Maintenance and replacement as required for the existing stops.
- Pre-season: Advertising posters and 6 sandwich boards are maintained and updated for key locations. The Coop Ringside Market, the Dickie Dugout, Tribune Bay Campsite, Bradsdadsland Campsite, Ford Cove Marina, and the Thatch Pub.
- Pre-season: Print copies of the schedule are distributed to every mailbox on the Island pre-season, with extras for handing out by the drivers and at the Welcome Centre at the Farmers’ Market.
- Pre-season: Updated operating information given to Colin Stepney, a volunteer who maintains the Hornby bus info. on Google Maps, Transit.
- Pre-season: Collaborations with Denman Works and the CVRD re a cross-Denman connector
- Pre-season: [www.hornbybus.com](http://www.hornbybus.com) website updated. Current route map and schedules, for both the Hornby and Denman bus services, are uploaded, and some current pictures are shared on the website.
- Pre-season: [www.hornbyisland.com](http://www.hornbyisland.com) “Trip Planning” section includes information on the bus network, for using when travelling to, visiting, the islands.
- Pre-season: As part of a sponsorship package new benches are built. So far, a shelter at the Coop, a simple bench at the Thatch Pub, and a full back/bench at Heart Vineyard are in place.



*Coop, Bus stop shelter, Hub of the schedule*



*Thatch/Ferry Landing Bus Bench*



*Vineyard Bus Bench*

- Pre-season: Sponsorships are solicited. Sponsorship changes for 2025 including adding the Sun Corona Music Cruises to the roster with a large decal on the back of the bus. Hornby Island Bakery and Pizzeria withdrew their sponsorship.
- Ongoing: The Hornby Bus Facebook page had 293 followers in 2022, by 2025 it exceeds 500. However, this page is not the focus of the Bus Social Media campaign.

The focus is on the 5.6K+ Community Connections FB page. One of the key Steering Committee members has an affinity for social media, and a keen wit, with an appreciative number of followers. Public support for the bus project appears to have become more favourable as “influencers” have increased the bus profile on social media.

- Annual: HICEEC has set up administration and book-keeping for the project, including weekly servicing the fare box and collecting rider count sheets, driver hours, pre-trip inspection reporting, fuel purchase credit/receipts, etc.
- Front and rear cameras have been purchased and installed, as a safety measure, record, and for the tricky back-up turns that the bus makes at both extremities of the horseshoe shaped hourly run. Spot monitoring of the camera rolls is done by the Steering Committee.
- During the season: Volunteers clean the bus, (vacuum/wash/top up the fluids), after service hours, approx. every two weeks. Affectionately known as “Fluff ‘n’ Buff”
- This year we lost the sponsorship, and cross-promotion of two very fun promotions. Previously, the Hornby Island Bakery & Pizzeria negotiated the promotions as part of their sponsorship package:

Random Acts of Pizza: Jon Laskin, from Hornby Island Bakery & Pizzeria, randomly comes onto the bus once/week and awards a large pizza to some lucky rider.

Free cookies: If you like playing cards, you'll love this cross promotion. There is a cookie "shoe" on the bus. When you get onto the bus, take a card. It will be redeemable for a free cookie at Hornby Island Bakery & Pizzeria. If you're lucky and get a JOKER - it's your choice of sweet treat. The Bakery estimated that 312 cookie cards were redeemed in 2024.



*Although these promotions add some fun, and talking points, for the bus, there were no drops in ridership to indicate that this type of promotion is beneficial to bus operations.*

- *Post season: The sandwich boards and route maps at the bus stop signs are collected and stored.*
- *Post season: And the much anticipated “Wind-Up” is held, to thank the sponsors, drivers, Steering Committee, and Friends of the Bus for their countless hours of work to keep “the wheels going round”. This year the event will be held at the Thatch Pub, with 30 attendees.*
- *Post season: Statistics are analyzed, accounting finalized and a report sent to the CVRD regarding the service.*
- *Post season: The bus is put to rest in the storage tent. Monthly checks are done. The bus started, a heater during the cold season, snow removed from the shelter roof, etc.*





*The pilot project indicates that the year-round population numbers do not support daily transit service. The current summer service ridership drops off towards the end of summer when there are fewer seasonal staff and visitors, and more available parking on the island.*

*Although there may be opportunities around an “on demand” type of service, the Steering Committee and HICEEC do not have the capacity to operate “ON CALL” public transportation for the remaining 10 months of the year.*

*With the proliferation of electric bikes, and the narrow “country roads”, driving a bus on the roads becomes harder to keep to a schedule. We are monitoring if this trend will also impact ridership numbers.*

*Recruiting drivers is one of the biggest challenges and our experience has shown that increasing wages are an incentive to attract personnel. Wages paid on Hornby are currently less than Handi Dart driver wages in the Comox Valley. This year the Hornby bus driver wage rate was \$30/hour with a \$2/hour bonus, on every hour worked, for staying until the end of the season. Most businesses on Hornby faced labour shortages this year which impairs their ability for offering full-service hours. We have had this bonus system in place for several years, and are pleased that, in 2025, all of our drivers earned the extra money.*

### *Consider forming a Society for the Local Bus Steering Committee*

*Together, the committee makes decisions on human resources, mechanicals, scheduling, routing, marketing, requests for special service, and other various topics relating to the Hornby community bus. It is critical that the committee have a paid staff member, HICEEC has been acting in this capacity, if a society were to be formed, budget would be needed for administration.*

# *Analysis & Recommendations: Comparison 2025 to 2024*

## *Review Route, Stops and Schedule*

*The hourly schedule has been developed with service to the most populated/commercially accessible locations. This hourly service ran from Ford Cove, through Sandpiper subdivision, to the Coop, through Galleon subdivision, to the ferry landing. Starting in 2022, 4 runs/day were made to Whaling Station, instead of to Ford Cove.*

There has not been tremendous uptake for this route. In 2023, we dropped to 3 runs/day to the intersection of Whaling Station and the road to Helliwell Park. For 3 years we have tried to develop this route. Numbers have not improved significantly, averaging about 1 ¼ riders per run. In 2025, consideration should be given to dropping this route, and refocusing on Ford Cove service.

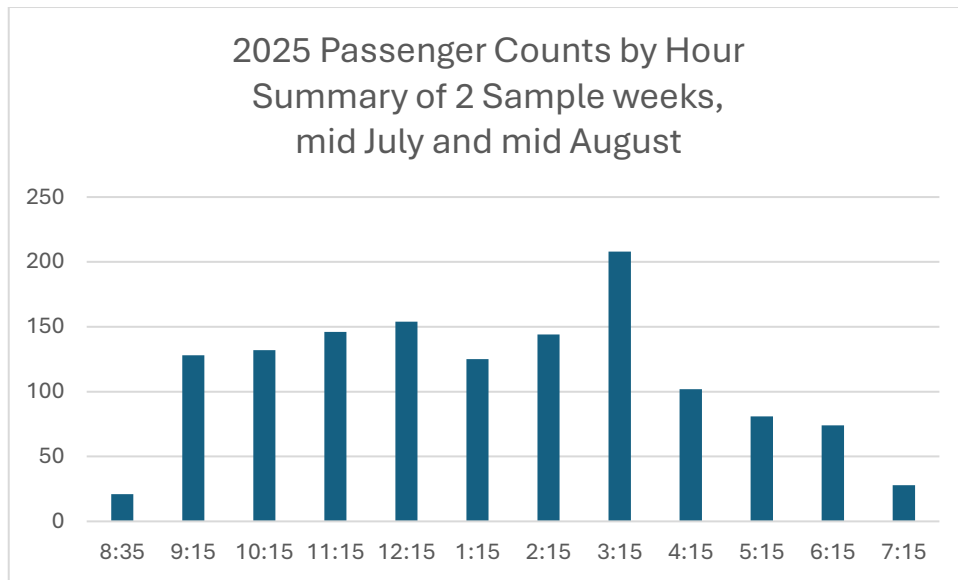
*At the busiest time of the summer, traffic snarls at Ford Cove, the Coop, and Wed./Sat. at the Farmer's Market caused driver frustration and delays.*

*A fundamental theory in developing the bus schedule is based on "ease of use for the consumer". For example, the time that the bus is at Ford Cove is 8:23, 9:23, 10:23, 11:23, 5:23, 6:23, 7:23. A rider simply needs to remember that their stop is at the 23-minute mark. Although there may be opportunities to alter the schedule, this core hourly service at the 3 anchor locations – Ford Cove, the Coop, and the ferry landing, should be maintained.*

The 8:15 a.m. starting time was established in 2021 to give working people rides to work. Both on-island and also working commuters that could potentially ride the Denman Connector Bus and use transit to get to work. Although uptake was limited, the workers that used the bus were grateful. Unfortunately, in 2023, we were unable to maintain that starting time, as we needed to use drivers from Denman Island to round out our work force. This has worked out very well for us, as one of those drivers has now worked 3 years on the Hornby Bus, and indicated their interest in next season. We adjusted our schedule to accommodate their earliest possible arrival on the island at 8 a.m. After arriving on the Island, they have to get to the bus Hub, do the pre-trip safety inspection,

and fill the fuel up. In 2024 and 2025, the same situation existed, and we again had an 8:35 a.m. start time.

This timeframe is tight. Additionally, this earliest time slot has lower ridership than later in the morning.



*In 2025 we recommend that the bus starting time is delayed until 9:35 a.m. daily.*

*Despite low ridership during the last run of the day in 2025, it is not being recommended for change due to new businesses opening where the later hours may be beneficial. Additionally, it allows the bus to meet the last incoming ferry of the day.*

*We remain excited about the possibilities of collaborating with the Denman Scuttlebus on having a through Denman connector. Unfortunately with how busy the ferries are, and their need to go off schedule to “shuttle”, the bus connections get unreliable, resulting in distrust on the part of riders. Early reports on Facebook were challenging the reliability of the service, as a coordinated schedule is very hard to keep when the ferries are shuttling or when they are running late.*

In 2021, and previous years the schedule had a midday gap. (no service 12:15 to 4:35 p.m.) In 2022, this gap was reduced to 45 minutes. (no service 2:30 to 3:15 p.m.) This allowed the bus to rest and the drivers to catch up if they were running late. Results showed that this gap was at the busiest time of routing. The gap was discontinued in 2023. Cancelling the mid-day gap in 2023 was a wise decision, as ridership is at its peak in midafternoon.

2025 service maintained the full-on service, 8:35 a.m. to 7:35 p.m., 7 days/week.

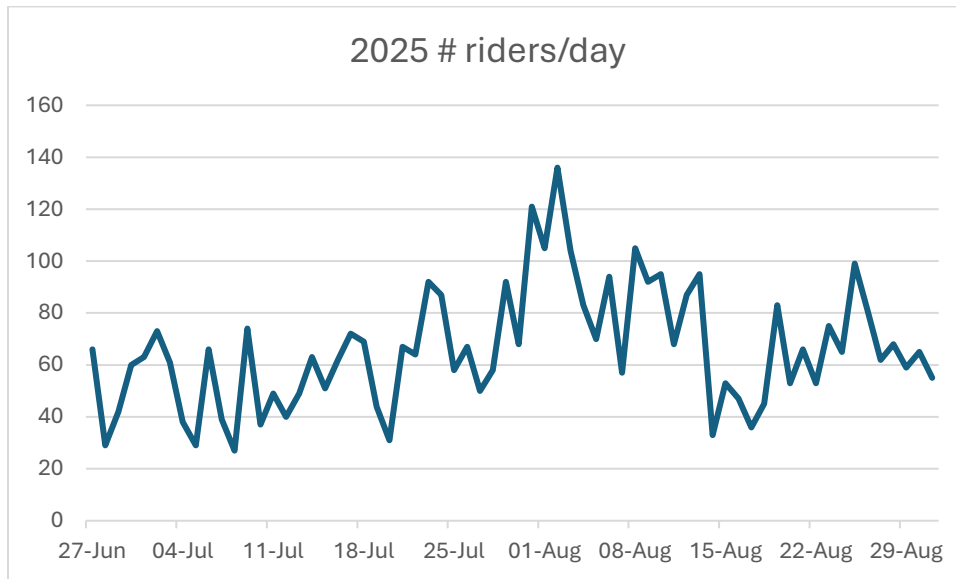
*The Thatch Pub has not been in operation for the past 5 summers, and the property is being redeveloped. With it's closure, the Friday night late run went from the fullest buses, in 2019, to being put on hold. It is anticipated that the 2026 operations at the Thatch Pub will once again inspire Hornby Islanders to take the bus, rather than drinking and driving, and the Friday night late run will be reinstated. This run also met the Friday night late ferries. If capacity allows, the committee might also consider extending evening service to Saturday nights to service island events where drinking is involved.*

*Ford Cove has a real parking problem, and people not obeying "no-parking" traffic signs, etc. The MoTi did some work at the Cove, Spring '23, including establishing a dedicated bus/emergency vehicle turnaround and putting Concrete Barriers along the inside of the 90 degree corner to stop vehicles parking on both sides of the road there. These improvements helped, but proved not enough in the busiest 4 weeks of summer. The bus stop had to be removed from the Harbour, and relocated 200 metres away. The Committee and Ford Cove Marina and Store, all did their best to communicate the change to potential riders. Ridership to that stop dropped off with the move of the bus stop. Safety for pedestrians walking on the narrow road continues to be a concern.*

*One of the favoured rider groups on the bus is the preschool. "The littles" love the bus!*

*The bus air conditioning was a welcome relief during hot spells, for the comfort of the drivers and the travelling public.*

## Ridership analysis



*In 2023, in 68 operating days, there were 4671 riders, or 6.2 riders/hour*

*In 2024, in 65 operating days, there were 4234 riders, or 5.9 riders/hour*

*In 2025, in 66 operating days, there were 4337 riders, or 5.8 riders/hour*

*The decrease in riders, 2023 to 2024 can be attributed to weather. With only one covered bus stop, many of the stops accessing outdoor locations, and the distance from homes to the stops are all negatives when there is precipitation in the air. There was some poor weather in the busiest month of the year: August.*

*The decline in riders/hours in 2025, as related to 2023 and 2024, may partially be accounted for by the proliferation of e-bikes, and other emphasis on active transportation.*

*There is also some uncertainty as to the reliability of data collection. The Steering Committee has investigated securing an Automated People Counter, to assist in data collection and analysis. However, lack of internet or cell service in the centre of the island limits data collection reliant on GPS.*

*No extension of the service time frame, for a full-time transit service, is recommended yet.*

*Statistics from operations during 2025 are consistent with those from 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024, the appetite for regular public transit is directly related to the number of people on the island. With summer service, that number starts building, reaches the peak for the two weeks on either side of the August long weekend, then starts tapering off as the tourist, and summer work, season comes to an end.*

## *Continue looking for efficiencies in Island Bus Service*

*Hornby Island is serviced with school bus service by First Student, a private bus contractor with its' head office in the U.K. This international company bids on the contract with the local School District, on a regular basis. The contract covers:*

- Service to the Hornby Island Elementary School.*
- Service to Hornby high school students is provided, daily during the school year, both on Hornby Island, on Denman Island, and on Vancouver Island - from Buckley Bay to high schools in Courtenay.*

*A similar contract has been awarded on Denman Island to this same international busing company.*

*Another benefit of collaborating service with the School District is that the job is then year-round. This would drastically reduce recruiting and training workloads.*

*In 2024, the Regional District commissioned WATT Consulting to do a Feasibility Study on the Hornby and Denman bus services. The Study recommended amalgamation between the Hornby and Denman Transit services. Representatives from the Comox Valley Regional District, School District 71, and the representatives from the Hornby and Denman bus committees have had discussions on how the government could be more efficient in this area.*

*The Hornby Bus Steering Committee has reviewed the report, and the discussions that ensued. Attached in Appendix E is a Summary of their identified Pros and Cons.*

## *Liaise with MOTI Regarding Quality of Stops*

*In 2019, HICEEC staff member, James Emerson, drafted a document with names and locations of stops, paired with photographs of them and handed it over (in physical form)*

*at the MOTI office in Courtenay, BC. The contact that James communicated with was Tallina McRae, District Operations, Technician/Area Manager. Tallina and MOTI granted permission to operate on Hornby, but a “permit” was not granted until we get more funding from the local government or get included in the BC Transit Framework.*

### ***Improve Reliability—Relief Bus, Radios, Interactive Phone App***

*Improvements to service and operation levels, new technology, etc. should be constantly regarded.*

### ***Skills Development & Driver Training***

*The Bus Steering Committee continues to encourage and promote local driver training. In 2019, a professional driving school was engaged, and brought to the Island, to conduct a one-day workshop to assist local people in obtaining their Class 4 Learner’s Permit. That training brought 3 “rookies” forward. Unfortunately, none of them ended up as full-fledged drivers. As an avenue to try again, in 2023, we once again sponsored a Driver Training program – bringing Darryl, from 1<sup>st</sup> Class Driving School to the Island. With 12 rookies (mostly from the Fire Department and the Outdoor Education Centre – not prospective employees), it was a successful community day. One local man went through this training, in conjunction with hands on training conducted by Steering Committee members. After successfully passing his 2<sup>nd</sup> attempt at getting the required Unrestricted Class 4 license, he started driving for us. Unfortunately, he didn’t have an aptitude for the job and was released after a few weeks of service. In 2024, we once again offered free training for anyone interested in driving, and again had a good number of people attend the training. Fortunately in 2024, three of our Steering Committee members attended and went on to get Class 4 Unrestricted licenses. These volunteers were invaluable in helping cover driver days away and in driving for special community events.*

*In 2025, we investigated the uptake for again holding the Professional Driving session, and did not have candidates come forward.*

*A major reason for the difficulty in on-island recruiting is that the Hornby bus only runs for two months/year, and those are the two busiest months when people have more work that they can handle already.*

*In 2021, 2022, and 2023 two regular drivers were recruited from off island.*

*In 2023, 2024 and 2025 one of our regular drivers commuted to Hornby from Denman to work. His availability was limited to the hours of the ferry service, meaning he was available to work between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. The bus had been operating two shifts/day, from 7:35 a.m. to 7:35 p.m. With mandatory pre-trip inspections and fueling up, we adjusted the schedule by an hour in order to make this work.*

*In 2024 and 2025, we were fortunate in our recruiting efforts. With our one Denman driver, and 2 drivers that are on Hornby during the summer and had their own accommodation.*

*Not having to arrange accommodation for off-island drivers was a big relief for the Committee, and Friends of the Bus.*

*The Steering Committee understands that lack of a qualified local workforce is a big challenge. This fall, all 3 drivers from Summer '25 have tentatively committed to returning for the 2026 season. However, experience indicates that they will get other jobs and not be available next Spring. Committee members are engaging with other interested parties, encouraging them to acquire the required qualifications over the next 9 months. Lack of actual bus driving experience is an issue when the Committee undertakes training. Like any other profession, experience is extremely important.*

*In order to be prepared for labour shortages, the Committee has developed a "Plan B" and "Plan C".*

*i. Reducing service:*

- from a standard schedule, this is not seen as ideal, due to the lack of continuity of service and lack of the fundamental principle "ease of use for the consumer". However, statistics are being tracked in order to make any necessitated drop. i.e. the lowest day (s) of ridership:*
- Reduce the hours of operation, by not running the first, and last two hours of every day.*



ii. *Relief driving provided by the Steering Committee.*

- *Currently 3 members on the Committee have their Class 4 license and have actively worked relief shifts. In 2024, we paid for Professional Driver training school in Vancouver for one of these Committee members. This not only added him to the relief driver roster, it also provided another trainer for new recruits. Currently, a fourth member has his Learners and is in-stream for acquiring his Class 4 license, too. It should be noted that all 4 of these Steering Committee members are senior citizens.*

## *Improve Promotion and Inform People Better*

*The Steering Committee hosts a pre-season “launch”, and “welcome to new drivers”, gathering at one of the Sponsor’s businesses.*

*Q.R. codes are on the bus schedules and in the Hornby Denman Visitor Guide, and on the 4 Visitor Guide aluminum map panels, showing the route, are placed at entry points to the island locations.*



*(Bus launch June , 2023, Hornby Island Bakery & Pizzeria)*

*Along with the route map and schedule being available on [www.hornbybus.com](http://www.hornbybus.com) and [www.hiceec.org](http://www.hiceec.org), paper copies were mailed out to all Hornby residents. Physical copies were left at local businesses, at the HICEEC Farmers Market Welcome Centre, and on the bus.*

*The community website, [www.hornbyisland.com](http://www.hornbyisland.com) gets massive traffic, and information for the bus was added to the “Trip Planning” section of that website.*

*Two committee members are regular contributors to local Social Media sites, and placed posts encouraging ridership, throughout the season.*

*The bus also serves several community events, in the off-hours of operation.*

*i. The Hornby Festival, in early August, “5 nights at the Farm”. We do a Park ‘n Ride for the evening events, with parking at the Coop and the Community Hall. These bus rides are very appreciated by the teens and young people.*

*ii. Post-season P.R. from participating in the Annual Fall Fair Parade and Zucchini Races. We pick up the Agricultural judges from Denman, at the ferry, take them to the Fair grounds, and vice versa. Upon arriving at the Fair, we then marshal and drive in the Parade. This year, Sept. 14<sup>th</sup>, we added an extra run midway into the Fair schedule, which was appreciated. We gave 25 people rides, to and fro. We also had bagged life saver candy (think wheels of the bus) to toss to the children watching the parade.*



*Fall Fair Parade, September 15, 2024*

## ***What does the future hold?***

### ***CVRD 2024 Feasibility Study into Busing on Hornby and Denman Islands***

*A contract was entered into with WATT Consulting to review bus service, and options for delivery of transit, to Hornby and Denman Island. The consultants engaged in online discussions with representatives from both Islands, including the Tribune Bay Outdoor Education Centre, regarding opportunities that might exist around the provision of service. On Feb. 7, 2025 a workshop was held at the Courtenay Visitor Centre Board Room, bringing the participants to the table.*

*Appendix F: Denman and Hornby Islands Bus Transportation Workshop Summary.*

### ***CVRD lead for securing tenure for a home for the bus***

*Mainroad Contracting has provided a home for the Hornby Bus, on a handshake. Great for a small community, but not enough as we look forward to electrification and a charging station.*

*“We have a lovely “new to us” bus, now let’s take good care of it.” Said everyone on the Steering Committee. Hence, a winter home for the bus in 2023.*

*Thanks to another handshake with Mainroad Contracting, a site was cleared, and a shelter erected in the Fall of 2023.*

*The shelter is a 15’ x 25’, steel frame, poly covered, structure. See Appendix B for details.*

*A more permanent home would need support from the CVRD.*

*There are four identifiable sites for the CVRD to assist in finding “a home for the bus”.*

- i. Formalize an agreement with Mainroad Contracting, for a specific area, and access to an electrical drop and infrastructure.*
- ii. Dedicate an area on the CVRD owned property at the Hornby Firehall for this use.*
- iii. Attain some Crown land, or convert CVRD held parkland, for the purpose.*

- iv. *A Spark home for the bus. In the initial negotiations for the Spark Society to secure the Old Firehall, one of the Bays was proposed as a home for the bus. Once the CVRD expedited that the tenure was turned over, this opportunity was lost. The CVRD could pursue this location, via property tax relief, or other means.*

## *Seek Funding for an Electric Bus*

*“At the direction of the membership at the December 12, 2018 Hornby Island Residents’ and Ratepayers’ Association (HIRRA) general meeting, the HIRRA Executive is writing in support of a local Hornby Community Bus Steering Committee, facilitated by the Hornby Island Economic Enhancement Corporation (HICEEC), applying for funding to acquire an electric bus, and associated infrastructure, to provide public transportation on Hornby Island.” (The full letter is in Appendix A).*

*The most likely source of funding for an electric bus, and associated infrastructure might be Community Grants, or applying for government transit grants.*



# 2025 Financials

## Revenue

*This year was another great year for local sponsorship. Our sponsors were the Hornby Island Coop, Jeffrey Rubinoff Sculpture Park, the First Credit Union, Sun Corona Music Cruises, Bradsdadsland Campground, and the Thatch Pub, In total, local sponsors donated \$12,000. and “in kind” programs.*

*In 2017, the Hornby businesses were told their support was needed to get a bus on the road, and they stepped up to the plate. The second year, two of the initial businesses dropped off, indicating they “had given”. Year 3, two more sponsors dropped off for economic reasons. At this juncture, the sponsorships, and funding have stabilized, and provide funds for establishing a capital reserve fund for future vehicle replacement. It should be noted that for many businesses, there is a vocalized resistance to paying for transit both through their property taxes, and a sponsorship.*

*In addition to sponsorships, 2025 on-board fare box collected \$2400. in donations, compared to \$2000. in 2024, and \$1800. in 2023.*

*The CVRD operationally contributed \$100,000. (Hornby property transit tax levy).*

## Expenses

As we have had issues in the past with drivers quitting their jobs in August, a policy was put in place to maintain the wage at \$30/hour (raised from \$28. in 2024), and to retain the program started in 2023, to give a \$2/hour bonus to drivers that stayed the full summer season. It is anticipated that another wage increase will be considered for 2026.

The major operational expenses are wages, fuel, project management, fleet & volunteer insurance, advertising, start-up and year-end appreciation events (for Sponsors, Steering Committee, Drivers, Friends of the Bus, HICEEC Board and Staff, with their partners), and training/licensing drivers. The Friends of the Bus are community members who come forward to help with weed eating at the bus stops, refinishing benches, washing the bus, vacuuming the bus, etc.

The new seat configuration on the bus, made for a very social, and enjoyable riding experience for both the drivers and the passengers. Several community groups have asked about access to the bus when the service is not offered transit style. The current Steering Committee has not had the capacity to operate the bus service for a longer time in the past. This is definitely more likely if more volunteers come forward.

When the drivers talk to tourist passengers, they are again able to pass on information about What's Happening and details of the bus service. Passengers have once again been very complimentary about how friendly and helpful the drivers are.

As the island speed limit is 60 km/hr. maximum, the bus is pretty good on gas, certainly better than the old bus. Bus operations are fortunate that the Coop Gas Bar is readily available for buying fuel and supplies.

HICEEC is responsible for the full management and operation of the Hornby Island transit project from April 1 to December 31, 2025, including provision of a suitable vehicle, arrangements for storage, garage, maintenance, and washing facilities, administration, fare collection, insurance, permits, communications, schedule development, advertising, and **procurement and management of qualified operators**, which includes recruiting, training, orientation, scheduling, coordination, payroll, retention bonuses, and assistance with transportation and housing for off-island staff.

HICEEC is invoicing the CVRD for **\$100,000**, which will cover eligible costs directly related to the project, including vehicle-related expenses, operational costs, administration, communications and marketing, staff attraction and retention, signage and equipment, professional services and volunteer contributions (including local support that contributes to project operations), and an allotment for vehicle and infrastructure rent of HICEEC owned assets, which then forms a reserve for vehicle and storage replacement to ensure long-term service continuity.

**All costs listed are eligible under the CVRD's definition of transit program expenses, and the \$100,000 invoiced represents the full funding requested for this project.**

Noted, activities, and reporting are more onerous than if the business was not based on "start-up, shut-down" cycles.

Although the bus operates from the end of June to the beginning of September, just over two months, the actual logistics of operating the service is a much longer time-period. Driver training, hiring, advertising, vehicle certification, insurance, repairs, scheduling, etc. all happen in the “off season”. Early season advertising starts in February, finalizing the bus paperwork ends in October, meaning that time must be dedicated for about 9 months/year. As the bus continues to operate, it is a larger commitment year-round to take care of - as we gain more assets in the form of bus, bus shelter, bus stops, safety equipment, signs, etc.

For 2025, we were able to hire 3 drivers to cover the 14 shifts/week, who all had access to local housing. We remain vulnerable to hiring if applicants do not have access to housing. In the past, one of our sponsors, Hornby Island Bakery and Pizzeria provided a 5<sup>th</sup> wheel to give a home to drivers recruited from off-island. This situation was tenuous and required dedicated extra energy to take on the responsibility of the rental.

Sponsorship money and the donations to the fare box have been used to establish a capital reserve fund, for replacement of the bus. Despite the tax levy, it must be emphasized, that only the passion of the Steering Committee, and the generous amount of volunteer labour that goes into the operations, is it possible to provide this seasonal service each year.

# Volunteers or the Professionals?

The Province has an organization in place whose purpose is to provide transit. Is it time for that organization to do so on Hornby?

## BC Transit 2023/24 - 2025/26 Service Plan

<https://www.bctransit.com/documents/1529721617436>

Quotes:

I. **Objective 2.2: Improve employee, partner, and community engagement. Key Strategies include:**

- Improve customers' perception of public transit through service and technology improvements, and customer engagement.
- Work with local government partners to build relationships and improve transit service in their communities.
- Collaborate with TransLink and BC Ferries to promote a seamless and convenient customer experience across the province, identifying priority actions that can be moved forward.

II. **Objective 3.1: Transition to a low carbon fleet and implement a fully electric fleet by 2040.**

III. **Appendix B of the Report is a Mandate Letter from the Minister Responsible, excerpt:**

- Engage with the Ministry, local governments, TransLink, and other key stakeholders to implement free transit for children up to and including age 12 across British Columbia.
  - Improve the integrative experience of customers connecting between BC Transit, BC Ferries and TransLink with a focus on opportunities for seamless transfer between services and expanded regional connections.....

From a review of the BC Transit Service Plan, and commitments to the Provincial Government for serving all British Columbians (aged 12 and under) and to integrate service with BC Ferries (which serve the ferry dependent community of Hornby Island), the CVRD should be actively engaged in having BC Transit provide service on Hornby Island.



The local pilot project has been extended to 7 years and has proven there is a seasonal appetite for transit, with ridership meeting, or exceeding, rural metrics. It is time for BC Transit and the CVRD to assume responsibility for transit operations on Hornby Island.

# Summary

With

- ever increasing public awareness of the bus service
- concerns over climate change and the need for positive solutions
- the wisdom for efficient public transportation systems
- the responsiveness of the Steering Committee to react to community feedback

the bus continues to appeal to the globally minded population groups on Hornby.

In analysis of the current pilot project, the primary recommendation is to have a dedicated team assume responsibility for Transit on Hornby Island.

At this time it appears that the two most likely routes are:

- i. Continue seasonal service with a volunteer Steering Committee, administered by HICEEC
- ii. B.C. Transit assumes their responsibility, through its service provider, the CVRD.

An umbrella organization, like the Tribune Bay Outdoor Education Centre could bring together all bus services under one organization. The efficiencies of scale seem obvious – the Centre, the school bus, and the community bus all bringing budget and resources forward for one Society to operate. In conjunction with Denman Island, or not.

The opportunity for an extended season lies with efficiencies in Island bus service regarding collaboration with School District 71. i.e. the school bus currently operates in the months the community bus does not operate. The CVRD could bid on the school busing contract and provide service year-round to the school children and to the adult population. Part of this collaboration would then be positioned to:

- Liaise with MOTI Regarding Quality of Stops
- Improve Reliability—Relief Bus, Radios, Interactive Phone App
- Skills Development & Driver Training. Access to staff and accommodation

- Access to the mechanical services from the CVRD for completing the bi-annual Commercial Vehicle Inspection reports, and other mechanical work required for the bus.
- Improve Promotion of the Service to enhance visibility and enhance ridership.
- Liaise with Denman Works and the CVRD regarding the Cross-Denman Connector
- The CVRD could be the lead for securing tenure for a home for the bus on it's existing properties on Hornby Island, or in the acquisition of a property. Considerations could include Crown land acquisition.
- Seek Funding for an Electric Bus & Infrastructure
- Lobbying for Area A "gas tax funds" to be directed specifically to transportation

The challenges are summarized around capacity for management of transit on Hornby, financing operations, liability and risk taken on by volunteers, aging of the volunteers, the communities stated desire for operating an electric vehicle, and in extending the service beyond the summer months.

The aging of the key Steering Committee volunteers is of prime concern, camaraderie and fellowship have been keeping this program going. The key members have skills in mechanics, professional driving, business acumen, and community connections. There is an impending capacity challenge for continuing as a volunteer program.

After 7 years of pilot project, the Hornby Bus Steering Committee recommends that the CVRD commit to a reliable, sustainable public transportation system on Hornby. Their options may include BC Transit and their mandate to provide province-wide transit service; the Tribune Bay Outdoor Education Society; or a Hornby or Denman society willing to take on a dual Island service.



Fall Fair, marshalling for the parade Sept. 14, 2025

# Appendix A: Endorsement Letter

February 26, 2019

Re: Hornby Community Bus Project

To Whom It May Concern:

At the direction of the membership at the December 12, 2018 Hornby Island Residents' and Ratepayers' Association (HIRRA) general meeting, the HIRRA Executive is writing in support of a local Hornby Community Bus Steering Committee, facilitated by the Hornby Island Economic Enhancement Corporation (HICEEC), applying for funding to acquire an electric bus, and associated infrastructure, to provide public transportation on Hornby Island.

The Hornby Community Bus Project has been researched, promoted, and sponsored by HICEEC, Hornby Island Outdoor Education Society, local businesses, and HIRRA starting in 2017 with the purchase of a second-hand 24 passenger bus. The pilot project was continued and expanded in 2018 and was the subject of a Feasibility Study funded by the Comox Valley Regional District.

Establishing a Hornby Community Bus Steering Committee and seeking funding for a quieter, fuel-efficient (or ideally electric) bus, were two of the key suggestions in the Feasibility Study report. There is strong community support for a low-emission local bus service.

HIRRA also supports HICEEC seeking access to some of the \$60,000 in taxes already requisitioned each year from Hornby Island taxpayers for public transit in the Comox Valley.

As the HIRRA Executive, we stand fully in favour of continued and improved public transportation for our community.

Sincerely,

HIRRA Executive: Rob McCreary, President  
Linda Manzer, Vice-president  
Lynn Nunley, Treasurer  
Anita Lewis, Secretary

# Appendix B: Bus Winter Vacation Home

*Purchased online from TMG Industrial*

<https://tmgindustrial.ca/products/tmg-st1525-15-x-25-rv-motorhome-storage-shelter-with-heavy-duty-17oz-pvc-fabric-cover>

**TMG Industrial 15' x 25' Storage Shelter, 17 oz PVC Fabric Cover, Front Roll-Up Door, Enclosed Rear Wall, 3-Layer Galvanized Steel Frame, 10' Straight Sidewalls, TMG-ST1525**



## Features

- Use for the safe, secure, covered outdoor storage of your RV/motorhome, boat, ATV, farm equipment, vehicles and more
- Commercial grade, 3-layer galvanized steel frame structure is long lasting, dependable and resistant to rust, wear and corrosion
- Commercial grade, triple-layer ripstop polyvinyl chloride (PVC) tarpaulin cover:
  - Stands strong against tearing, leaking, and chemical corrosion
  - Natural flame retardant, resistant to chemicals and oil
  - UV protected and waterproof
  - Fabric color: White
- Ample storage room with 10' straight sidewalls and approximately 375 square feet of overall covered space for a spacious, outdoor protected area
- Designed with 60" truss spacing and collar beams on the end trusses for maximum strength and stability that stands up to the elements
- Peaked roof design, dirt skirts and roll-up doors protect you and your equipment from the elements while adding to the shelters overall stability

## Specifications

- Exact floor footprint: 15' (W) x 25' (L) □ Square footage: 375 sq-ft
- Truss spacing: 60"
- Truss quantity: 6 groups □ Peak ceiling height: 14' □ Sidewall height: 10'
- Truss tubes: Ø2.3" - 15 GA (approx.) □ Purlin tubes: Ø2" - 15 GA (approx.)
- Purlins on rafter: 35 of 7 rows
- Door clearance: 11' (W) x 10'(H) □ Door clearance: 11' (W) x 10'(H) □ Cover material: 17 oz PVC fabric
- Foundation required: concrete slabs or equivalent □ Heavy-duty baseplates w/pre-drilled holes
- Included sleeve anchor bolts

## Product Description

This shelter is designed to be installed on any concrete pad or equivalent, so you can set it up wherever is most convenient regardless of how rural, remote or industrial your location is.

Made of strong, heavy-duty commercial grade polyvinyl chloride (PVC) fabric that is triple layered to prevent tearing. The first 10' of each side is a straight wall which amplifies storage space along the edges, and an enclosed rear wall and front fabric roll-up door helps protect your vehicle from being exposed during harsh weather.

Commercial grade 3-layer galvanized steel frame structure is heavy-duty and built to last with a ratchet strap system that has been integrated to easily secure ground bars to the footplates for a sturdy, reliable footing. Dirt skirts along both sides also help to prevent crosswinds from kicking up under the shelter.

# Appendix C: 2025 Schedule

## ROUTE #1

SOUTHBOUND - Co op to Ford Cove @ Bond Rd.

Co op / Gas Bar	Central @ Sandpiper	Central @ Strachan	Ford Cove @ Bond Rd.
9:15	9:18	9:19	9:23
11:15	11:18	11:19	11:23
12:15	12:18	12:19	12:23
1:15	1:18	1:19	1:23
3:15	3:18	3:19	3:23
4:15	4:18	4:19	4:23
6:15	6:18	6:19	6:23
7:15	7:18	7:19	7:23



NORTHBOUND - Ford Cove @ Bond Rd. To Co op

Ford Cove @ Bond Rd.	Central @ Strachan	Top of Sandpiper	Sandpiper Beach	Porpoise Cres. @ Seawright	Top of Seawright	Co op / Gas Bar
9:23	9:27	9:29	9:30	9:31	9:33	9:35
11:23	11:27	11:29	11:30	11:31	11:33	11:35
12:23	12:27	12:29	12:30	12:31	12:33	12:35
1:23	1:27	1:29	1:30	1:31	1:33	1:35
3:23	3:27	3:29	3:30	3:31	3:33	3:35
4:23	4:27	4:29	4:30	4:31	4:33	4:35
6:23	6:27	6:29	6:30	6:31	6:33	6:35
7:23	7:27	7:29	7:30	7:31	7:33	7:35

## ROUTE #2

WESTBOUND - Co op to Ferry

Coop / Gas Bar	Community Hall/Farmers' Mkt	Sollans @ Library	Sollans @ Gunpowder	Gunpowder @ Cowie	Carmichael @ Cowie	H. Heart Vineyard/Lea Smith	Fossil Beach/Savoie Rd.	Central @ Westview Farm	Braddisland Campsite	J. Rubloff Sculpture Park	Thatch Pub/Ferry
8:35	8:39	8:40	8:41	8:43	8:44	8:47	8:48	8:49	8:50	8:51	8:55
9:35	9:39	9:40	9:41	9:43	9:44	9:47	9:48	9:49	9:50	9:51	9:55
10:35	10:39	10:40	10:41	10:43	10:44	10:47	10:48	10:49	10:50	10:51	10:55
11:35	11:39	11:40	11:41	11:43	11:44	11:47	11:48	11:49	11:50	11:51	11:55
12:35	12:39	12:40	12:41	12:43	12:44	12:47	12:48	12:49	12:50	12:51	12:55
1:35	1:39	1:40	1:41	1:43	1:44	1:47	1:48	1:49	1:50	1:51	1:55
2:35	2:39	2:40	2:41	2:43	2:44	2:47	2:48	2:49	2:50	2:51	2:55
3:35	3:39	3:40	3:41	3:43	3:44	3:47	3:48	3:49	3:50	3:51	3:55
4:35	4:39	4:40	4:41	4:43	4:44	4:47	4:48	4:49	4:50	4:51	4:55
5:35	5:39	5:40	5:41	5:43	5:44	5:47	5:48	5:49	5:50	5:51	5:55
6:35	6:39	6:40	6:41	6:43	6:44	6:47	6:48	6:49	6:50	6:51	6:55

EASTBOUND - Ferry to Co op

Thatch Pub/Ferry	Shingle Spit @ Shire	J. Rubloff Sculpture Park	Braddisland Campsite	Fossil Beach/Savoie Rd.	H. Heart Vineyard/Lea Smith	Cowie @ Carmichael	Cowie @ Gunpowder	Gunpowder @ Sollans	Sollans @ Library	Community Hall/Farmers' Mkt	Coop / Gas Bar
8:55	8:57	8:59	9:00	9:02	9:03	9:05	9:06	9:07	9:09	9:10	9:13
9:55	9:57	9:59	10:00	10:02	10:03	10:05	10:06	10:07	10:09	10:10	10:13
10:55	10:57	10:59	11:00	11:02	11:03	11:05	11:06	11:07	11:09	11:10	11:13
11:55	11:57	11:59	12:00	12:02	12:03	12:05	12:06	12:07	12:09	12:10	12:13
12:55	12:57	12:59	1:00	1:02	1:03	1:05	1:06	1:07	1:09	1:10	1:13
1:55	1:57	1:59	2:00	2:02	2:03	2:05	2:06	2:07	2:09	2:10	2:13
2:55	2:57	2:59	3:00	3:02	3:03	3:05	3:06	3:07	3:09	3:10	3:13
3:55	3:57	3:59	4:00	4:02	4:03	4:05	4:06	4:07	4:09	4:10	4:13
4:55	4:57	4:59	5:00	5:02	5:03	5:05	5:06	5:07	5:09	5:10	5:13
5:55	5:57	5:59	6:00	6:02	6:03	6:05	6:06	6:07	6:09	6:10	6:13
6:55	6:57	6:59	7:00	7:02	7:03	7:05	7:06	7:07	7:09	7:10	7:13

## ROUTE #3

NORTHBOUND Co op to Helliwell

Co op / Gas Bar	Tribune Bay Education Center	Helliwell Whaling Station Beach
10:15	10:18	10:23
2:15	2:18	2:23
5:15	5:18	5:23

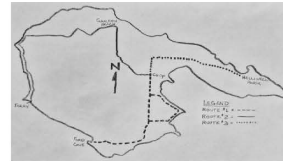
### Hornby Island Bus Timetable for 2025

Our loveable White Bus will operate from June 27 to August 31. 3 trips a day to Whaling Station and Helliwell. 8 trips/day to Ford Cove, and a full 11 trips/day to other prime destinations.

SOUTHBOUND Helliwell to Co op

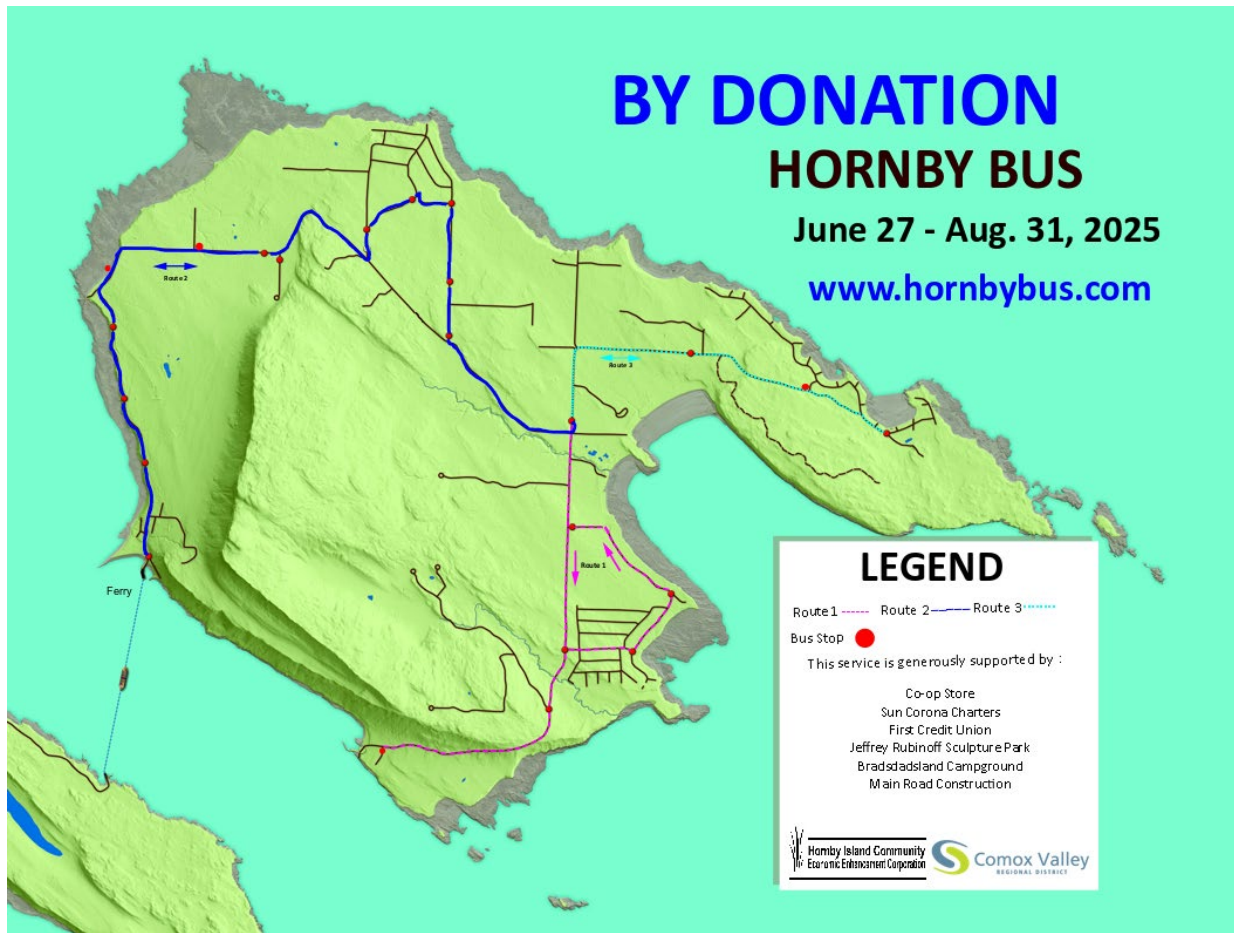
Helliwell Whaling Station Beach	St John @ Gurney Rd.	Tribune Bay Education Center	Co op / Gas Bar
10:23	10:25	10:28	10:30
2:23	2:25	2:28	2:30
5:23	5:25	5:28	5:30

HOP ON THE BUS!





# Appendix D: 2025 Route map



# Appendix E: Pros & Cons of Hornby Denman Bus Service Amalgamation

*Hornby Bus Steering Committee – March 19, 2025 Summarized*

## Overview

Amalgamating bus services could improve efficiency, reduce car use, and strengthen ferry and Comox Valley transit connections. However, significant challenges remain around safety, infrastructure, and governance.

## Key Challenges

- **Infrastructure Deficits:** Neither island has proper storage, maintenance, or washing facilities; CVRD leadership would be required to secure these.
- **Limited Growth:** Hornby runs one bus with limited support. Both islands lack land for expansion or repair facilities.
- **Safety & Reliability:** Denman vehicles are older, uncertified under NSC, and do not meet School District standards.
- **Insurance & Liability:** Hornby/Denman policies differ; Denman's flag-down/home drop-offs are perceived by Hornby to pose liability risks.
- **Governance & Financial Gaps:** Denman's legal/organizational structure remains unclear. Hornby enhances revenues with a sponsorship component, allowing a capital reserve fund to be established.
- **Ridership:** Historic Hornby ridership averages (approx. 6 riders/hour in peak months) show that extended service without integration is not financially viable.

## Potential Benefits

- **Reduced Car Use & Congestion:** Fewer vehicles in ferry lineups and on roads.
- **Improved Connectivity:** Seamless links to Comox Valley Transit.
- **Tourism & Accessibility:** Easier travel for visitors, supporting local economies.
- **Sustainability:** Potential access to electrification and green transit funding.
- **Stronger Grant Applications:** A two-island model creates a more compelling case for larger regional funding.

- **School District Participation:** Adds cost-sharing, provincial funding, and compliance with safety standards. A 2025 Tribune Bay OEC plan showed potential for entrepreneurial delivery and service expansion.

## **Conclusion**

Amalgamation has clear long-term benefits but faces major hurdles in infrastructure, safety, insurance, and governance. Tribune Bay OEC is not positioned to lead. Progress depends on **CVRD leadership** with **School District participation** to provide funding, oversight, and facilities. Without proper bus “homes” on both islands, the project cannot succeed. A joint approach, however, could position Hornby and Denman as leaders in rural transit innovation and unlock significant grant opportunities.

# **Denman and Hornby Islands Bus Transportation Workshop: Summary – DRAFT**

February 7, 2025

Comox Valley Visitor Centre Boardroom

10:00 AM – 3:00 PM

# Overview

On February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024, the Denman and Hornby Islands Bus Transportation Workshop was held for key parties that are involved in current bus services on the Islands. This workshop was a result of the Islands Bus Transportation Study, supported by the Comox Valley Regional District and transportation planning firm WATT Consulting Group with participation from the key parties, to collaboratively determine a path forward for effectively administering, operating and funding community bus services on Denman and Hornby Islands over the shorter and longer term.

In place of traditional meeting minutes, this document serves as the summary of key workshop outcomes to refer to as a resource for moving forward.

The following topics were discussed:

- Meeting objectives
- Existing bus transportation conditions
- Considerations for providing bus transportation on the Islands
- Opportunities for effective coordination
- Opportunities to move forward
- Detailed next steps

The key outcome from the discussion(s) based on those in attendance was to pursue exploring the opportunity for multiple parties to come together to provide community bus services on both Islands for the longer term. The group charted out next steps to work toward achieving this outcome.

Highlights from each discussion that led to the overall key outcome are summarized in the following pages.



# Workshop Details

## Attendees:

- **Mike Zbarsky** – Comox Valley Regional District
- **Dustin Bennett** – Comox Valley Regional District
- **Sam Borthwick** – Denman WORKS! & Denman Island Bus Service (DIBS)
- **Tony Gregson** – Denman WORKS! & Denman Island Bus Service (DIBS)
- **Karen Ross** – Hornby Island Economic Enhancement Corporation (HICEEC) & Hornby Bus
- **Steve MacDonald** – Hornby Island Economic Enhancement Corporation (HICEEC) & Hornby Bus
- **Gord Campbell** – representative of Tribune Bay Outdoor Education Society (on hold)
- **Molly Proudfoot** – School District 71
- **Tree Murdock** – School District 71
- **Tania Wegwitz** – WATT Consulting Group (facilitator)
- **Mallory Lowes** – WATT Consulting Group (facilitator)

## Purpose:

Collaboratively determine a path forward for administrating, operating and funding community bus services on Denman and Hornby Islands over the shorter and longer term, based on options presented in the Denman and Hornby Islands Bus Transportation Study.

# Discussion #1: Meeting Objective

## What are we looking to get out of today's meeting?

### Key points heard:

- Determining resources to coordinate across organizations
- Making services more reliable
- Determining a sustainable structure and support for delivering services year-round
- Opportunities for charter or flexible bus services for programs
- Opportunities to coordinate with the School District 71 school bussing contract



# Discussion #2: Existing Conditions

## Has anything changed since starting the Bus Transportation Study?

### Tribune Bay Outdoor Education Centre:

- Currently on hold; SD 69 & 71 decided not to renew permit with BC Parks
- The Society has one year to look for other options (currently exploring opportunities with ISPARC, FNHA, and other Indigenous groups)
- Therefore, the lands are no longer available for bus storage and shared resource opportunities are undetermined until a new use or operator has been finalized
- However, once the new use/operator has been determined, opportunities could be presented at that point to coordinate group transportation or shared resources

### HICEEC:

- Personnel includes someone who completes data entry and analysis for ridership, fares and donations

### DIBS:

- Clarifying that staff complement also includes Marketing coordinator role that takes on social media, marketing and graphic design
- Obtained an additional vehicle:
  - 6 passenger van
  - 2015
  - To be used in the off-season and back-up (right-sizing vehicle for ridership demand)
  - Better to use on longer driveways when providing door-to-door service and can potentially be suitable for an on-demand type of service
  - Potential for having two vehicles in service at once, if ridership demand calls for it and if there is enough funding to do so

*No other major changes noted from the other organizations present.*



# Discussion #3: Why Transit?

When thinking about transportation on the Islands now and in the future and your organizations' involvement, the most important things we need to consider are:



## Reducing Private Automobile Demand

- **Environmental awareness:** reducing greenhouse gas emissions or reliance on fossil fuels
- **Supporting alternative transportation:** promoting multi-modal transportation and integration with active transportation
- **Reducing vehicles:** reducing the number of vehicles on the Islands and on the ferries to improve parking, road safety, traffic, infrastructure longevity and land use



## Social & Economic Enhancement

- **Access to jobs:** creating local jobs and providing transportation to jobs for those who cannot drive (youth, seniors, people with diverse abilities, folks without a vehicle)
- **Access to services:** connecting people who cannot drive to appointments, shops, etc., both for individual benefit and enhancing the local economy with more customers and service users
- **Enhancing socialization:** connecting people who cannot drive to services and each other
- **Reducing barriers:** enhancing access to education and essential services
- **Mindful tourism enhancement:** bringing more people to the Islands to contribute to the local economy without bringing the challenges that come with more vehicles

# Discussion #3: Why Transit? - Continued

When thinking about transportation on the Islands now and in the future and your organizations' involvement, the most important things we need to consider are:



## Regional Connectivity

- Integration with regional transportation services: Island Link, Comox Valley Regional Transit System (BC Transit), BC Ferries, etc.
- Connection to the core Comox Valley, Nanaimo and/or Vancouver for residents and visitors



## Safety

- Reducing drinking and driving
- Reducing vehicle traffic to create safer roads
- Ensuring safety of students for student transportation: bus stops, walking distance, vehicle capacity, mixing between ages and public / students



## Efficiency

- Reducing redundancies of services, resources and workload
- Coordinating with other services/organizations to utilize resources effectively



## Resiliency

- Consistent staffing
- Sustainable funding models
- Ensuring tax dollars are used appropriately and are providing the best value for service

# Discussion #3: Why Transit? - Continued

When thinking about transportation on the Islands now and in the future and your organizations' involvement, the most important things we need to consider are:



## Credibility

- Ensuring services are **reliable** (on-time)
- Ensuring bus services are reputable, reliable and trustworthy in order to:
  - Advocate for infrastructure (storage and dedicated parking spaces at key destinations)
  - Advocate for funding and resources (from the CVRD and other grant opportunities)
  - Effectively coordinate with other services and organizations (BC Ferries, School District 71)



## Flexibility

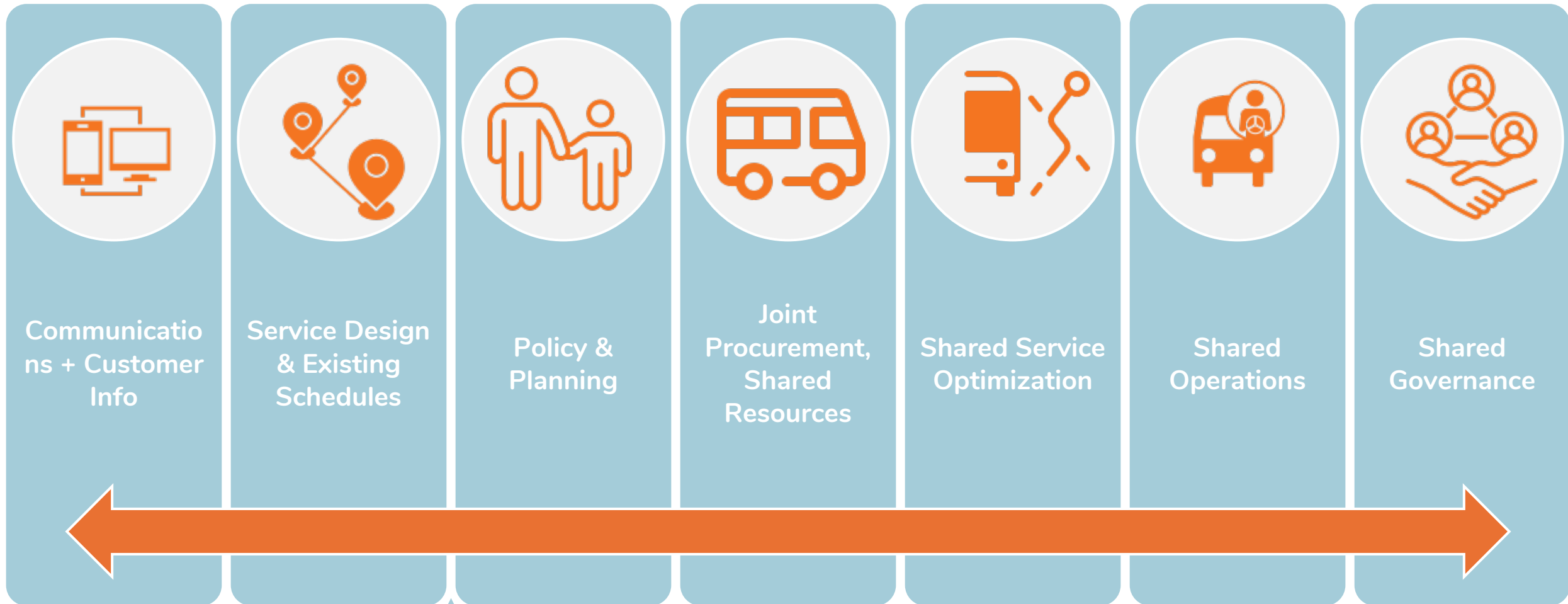
- Ability to provide transportation outside of regular bus services (i.e., charters, private events, community programming, on-demand, door-to-door)
- For student transportation, ability to adapt to early dismissals and new stops (as new students arrive)
- Ability to adapt to changing ferry schedules and ridership demand

## Discussion Key Takeaway:

Majority of themes and considerations discussed had overlap between all parties.

# Typical Transportation “Coordination Continuum”

The following Transportation Coordination Continuum was presented to the group as a form of framing the conversation around the various types of ways that transportation organizations and services can collaborate and work together.



Consensus from DIBS and HICEEC that currently, the organizations coordinate somewhere between Service Design and Policy & Planning.

# Discussion #4: Transportation Coordination Continuum

## How can we effectively coordinate between groups?

### Ideas for initial coordination opportunities:

- Finding land to store vehicles
- Housing for staff
- Building a resilient administrating and operating body that is not vulnerable to public disruption with representation from both Islands
- Aligning policies (i.e., dogs/pets on the bus, collecting ridership data, etc.)
- Staff sharing (i.e., marketing, data collecting and analyzing, drivers, etc.)
- Accounting
- Driver training
- Seeking funding (e.g., grants)
- Marketing / promotion
- Sharing knowledge
  - Methods for organizing and analyzing ridership data
  - Outreach to other community bus providers for advice on administration, operations and funding
- **Can be a phased approach – not all areas need to be coordinated at once.**

### Hornby Bus and DIBS are already coordinating in the following capacities:

- Borrowing buses when necessary
- Sharing drivers
- Schedules

### Key takeaways:

- The discussion involved lots of back and forth on the continuum, particularly about whether to start small with coordinating between two organizations or take the larger step of forming one organization.
- Consensus was to form a single separate society which may offer more resilience when looking toward the longer-term.
- Further takeaways are summarized in the following pages.

# Discussion #5: Opportunities to Move Forward & Next Steps

## What do we need to move forward?

### Community Bus Services:

- Community bus services that are credible and eligible to eventually work with SD 71 in providing student transportation. **Established solution to community bussing on the Islands needs to be developed prior to pursuing opportunities with SD 71.**
- Community-based bus services to continue to accommodate unique community needs (i.e., ability to provide group transportation for events and programs, ability to be flexible with schedules and routes, etc.).
- Coordinated community bus services between Islands to effectively and efficiently provide transportation using allocated funding from CVRD.
- Resilient administration body for public transportation on the Islands that is not vulnerable to public disruption with representation from both Islands.
- **Clear and broad mandate for providing public transportation on the Islands. Programming specifics (i.e., types of services) can be worked out – and can evolve – over time.**
  - Types of services and service details can continue to be unique to each Island based on needs and demand.
  - Coordinated services with one body allows for a broad overarching mandate and vision that focuses on providing public transportation and therefore allows for stronger advocacy and the ability to pursue other transportation-related funding opportunities.

# Discussion #5: Opportunities to Move Forward & Next Steps

## What do we need to move forward?

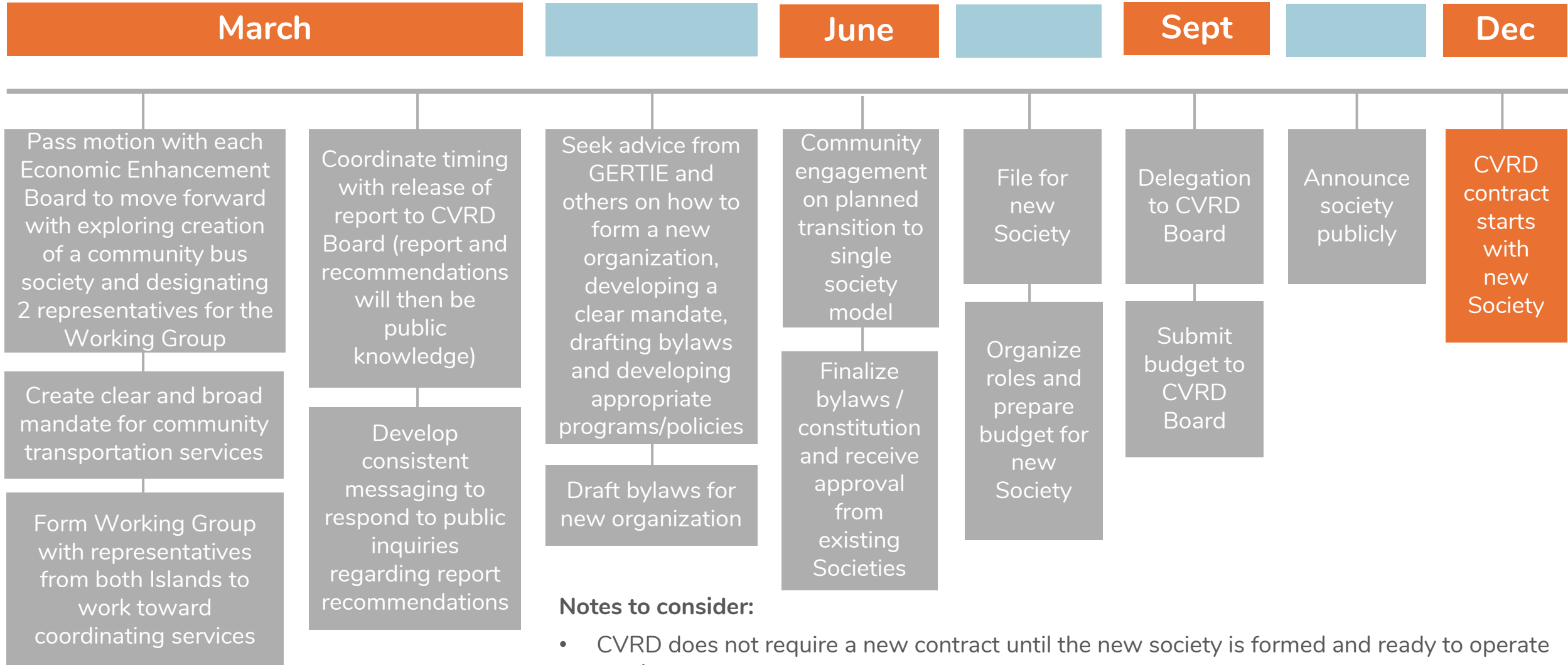
### School District 71:

- Student transportation needs to be provided by a credible organization – student safety comes first.
- Students and public cannot be on a school bus together.
- Language exists in the school bussing contract that allows for school bussing services to be separately provided on the Islands from the rest of the School District, for the Islands to be removed from the contractor's scope of services, and/or for the school bus contractor to additionally provide community bus services on the Islands. Either of these stipulations can be instigated or removed at any point throughout the contract with a 30-day notification.
- Potential for community bus services to coordinate with contractor: lease vehicles, subcontract student transportation services, etc.
- Other factors to consider:
  - Bus stop locations and appropriate walking distances for students (differs between elementary and secondary)
  - Vehicle capacity (ensuring vehicles have enough seats for all students)
  - Intermingling between ages (elementary and secondary) and public / students

# Discussion #5: Opportunities to Move Forward & Next Steps

## Timeline for 2025:

Building from the previous discussion, participants charted out a potential timeline of activities to achieve the key outcome.



### Notes to consider:

- CVRD does not require a new contract until the new society is formed and ready to operate services.
- CVRD budgeting for 2026 begins in September. A preliminary budget for the new society will need to be prepared by then to submit to the CVRD Board.



\*Photo is missing participants as some had to depart before the end of the workshop

