Hornby Island Community Economic Enhancement Corporation

Hornby Island
Community Bus Project 2024
FALL, 2024

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

Hornby Island Community
Economic Enhancement Corporation

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Hornby Island Community Economic Enhancement Corporation

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.

2024 Bus Steering Committee:

- Peter Mills
- Garth Millan
- Gary Law
- Ray Therrien
- Chris Allen
- Steve Macdonald
- On Sabbatical: John Nemy

Drivers:

- Jill Gathright
- Sorcia Amor
- David Hayward
- Stu Brown

HICEEC Administration:

- Karen Ross
- Cam Domay
- John Heinegg

Volunteers/Friends of the Bus:

- Al Dickie
- JoAnn Kean
- Matt Dickie
- Michelle Easterly
- Henry Touwslager
- Paul Ackerson
- Goya Ngan
- Edward Kooij
- Frances Millan
- Sam Elder
- Colin Boyd
- Susie Long
- Colin Stepney

Hornby Island Community Economic Enhancement Corporation

Funding support and guidance provided by the Comox Valley Regional District, the taxpayers of Hornby Island, and the local sponsors.

Comox Valley REGIONAL DISTRICT

Thank you to our supporters

Hornby Island Community
Economic Enhancement Corporation

A Successful Year

"A great group of people working together to have summer bus service".

Leave the driving to us!

WIN: RANDOM ACTS OF H.I. PIZZA,
RIDER PERK: H.I. BAKERY COOKIE CARD
INFO.: FRIENDLY & KNOWLEDGEABLE DRIVERS

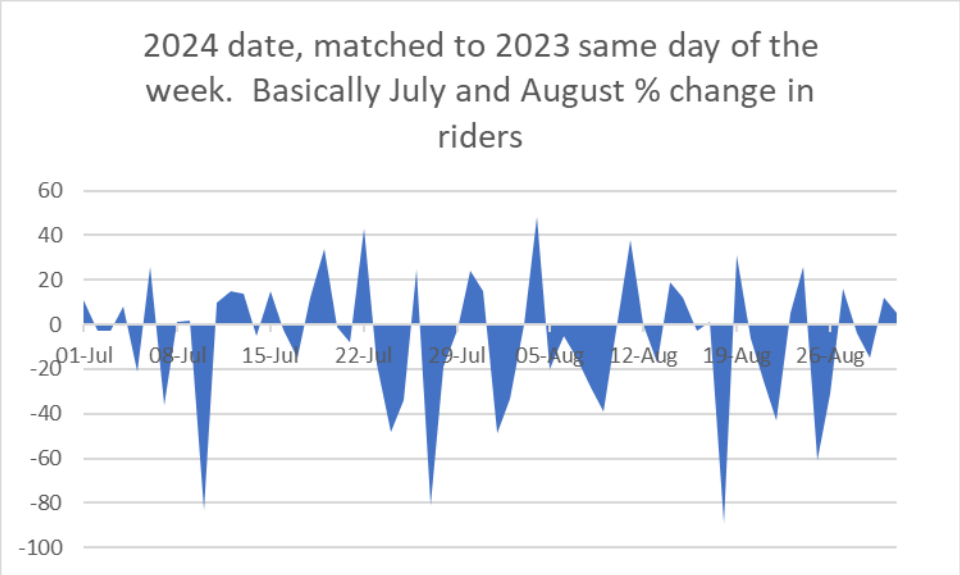
RIDE FOR FREE
DONATIONS WELCOMED

ROUTE INFO.
WWW.HORNBYBUS.COM

ISLAND COVERAGE

COOP & FOUR CORNERS, FORD COVE, SANDPIPER BEACH, TRIBUNE BAY, HELLIWELL PARK, WHALING STATION BAY, JOE KING BALLPARK, FARMERS MARKET & CREDIT UNION, GALLEON BEACH, HEART VINEYARD, BRADSDADSLAND, JR SCUPTURE PARK, THE FERRY

With 4234 riders in 2024, the service was considered a success.



% change in ridership, 2023 to 2024

Recent 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.

(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 Tseshaut 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 Tseshaut 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:

- *<u>February:</u> Service 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.
- *<u>Spring:</u> Local sponsorships solicited, and associated advertising decals designed and placed on the sides of the bus*
- *<u>Spring:</u> 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. For the bus, Steering Committee members undertake the road training which follows.*

- *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 of 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.*
- *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, and the Thatch Pub.*
- *Pre-season: Print copies of the schedule are distributed to every mailbox pre-season, with extras for handing out by the drivers and the Welcome Centre at the Farmers' Market.*

- *Pre-season: Tent cards produced and distributed, advertising website access for local events and the bus info. and distributed to restaurants. (note: not done in 2024).*
- *Pre-season: Collaborations with Denman Works and the CVRD re a cross-Denman connector*
- *Pre-season: 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 "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.*

- 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 servicing the fare box and* collecting *rider count sheets, driver hours, pre-trip inspection reporting,* etc., *weekly.*
- *Last summer a back-up camera was purchased, and installed, as a safety measure for the tricky back-up turns that the bus makes at both extremities of the horseshoe shaped hourly run.*
- *This summer a front facing camera was purchased, and installed, as a cautionary measure for recording activities affecting the bus.*
- *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"*
- *Again this year two very fun promotions were continued, as part of the sponsorship package from Hornby Island Bakery & Pizzeria:*
  - 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.

- *<u>Post season</u>: The sandwich boards and route maps at the bus stop signs are collected and stored.*
- *<u>Post season:</u> 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 was held at Heart Vineyard, with 30 attendees.*
- *<u>Post season:</u> Statistics are analyzed, accounting finalized and a report sent to the CVRD regarding the service.*
- *<u>Post season:</u> 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.*

Analysis & Recommendations

It is recommended that the Hornby community summer bus service keep operating. During the busy time of year, transit is needed on Hornby Island and the established Comox Valley transit does not adequately provide transit service to this service area.

Specific recommendations

Reduce the Transit tax levy on Hornby to accommodate the current level of transit service on the island.

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.

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 2024, 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.*

Comparison 2024 to 2023

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. In 2024, 3 runs/day were made to Whaling Station, instead of to Ford Cove. 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. Their earliest arrival on the island was 8 a.m. and then they had to get to the bus and do the pre-trip safety inspection. In 2024, the same situation existed, and we again had an 8:35 a.m. start time.

During their startup, we provided the Denman Bus team with advice based on our experiences, and are grateful for their willingness to refer Denman drivers to work on the Hornby Bus in 2023 and 2024.

We also 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. (Shuttling is essential during the busiest times of the year).

In 2021, and previous years the schedule had a midday gap. *(no service12:15 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. 2024 service maintained the full-on service, 8:35 a.m. to 7:35 p.m., 7 days/week.

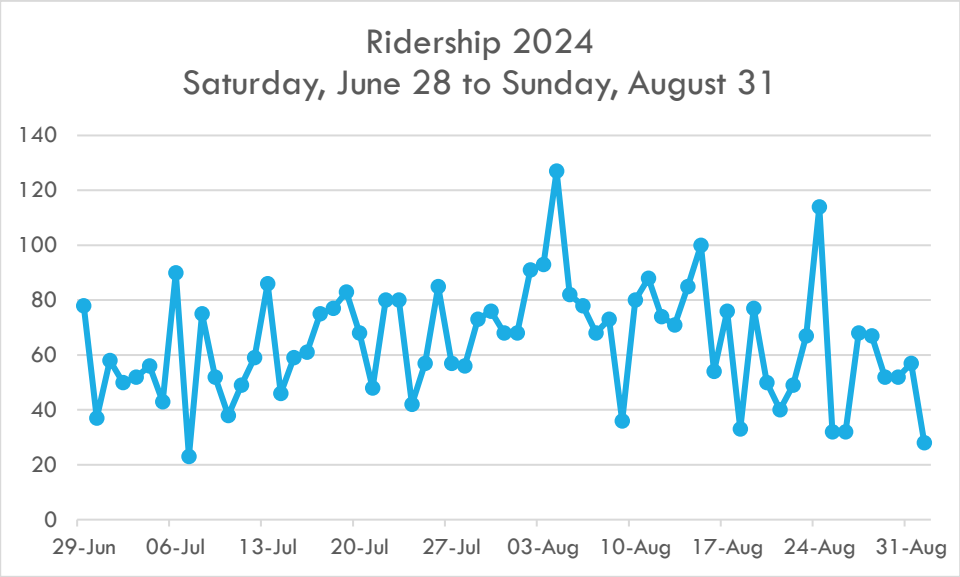
The Thatch Pub has not been in operation for the past 4 summers, and the property is being redeveloped. With it's closure, the Friday night late run went from the fullest buses, in 2019, to being put on hold. It is anticipated that the 2025 scheduled reopening of the Thatch Pub will once again inspire Hornby Islanders to take the bus, rather than drinking and driving, and the Friday night late run will be reinstated.

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 stop had to be moved from the Harbour, 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. *Pedestrians walking on the 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 2022, in 63 operating days there were 3566 riders, or 5.2 riders/hour
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
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. On top of some poor weather in August, there is also some uncertainty as to the reliability of data collection. The Steering Committee is investigating securing an Automated People Counter, to assist in data collection and analysis.

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

Statistics from operations during 2024 are consistent with those from 2019, 2021, 2022, and 2023, *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. In 2017, Gord Campbell, the manager of the Tribune Bay Outdoor Education Society, worked with School District 71 to get the Hornby run designated as a "white run", which means that the non-student public could have access to the same bus as the older children. (Not the littles). 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.

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.

Representatives from the Comox Valley Regional District, School District 71, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Transportation have had discussions on how the government could be more efficient in this area. We are excited that these discussions have been revived in the Fall of 2024. The School Bus contract is for 5 years and is up for bids in January, 2025, with a closing date in June/25.

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 1st 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 2nd 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.

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 both regular drivers were recruited from off-island.
In 2024, we were fortunate in our recruiting efforts. This year, we had a returning driver, and were fortunate to recruit two local drivers. One is the relief for the school bus, so had a full, professional development prior to working for us, and the other was previously a

First Responders and had the license class previously for driving the Fire Truck. Our driver manager from a few summers ago was also available for some relief work, as were several committee members. 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 '24 have committed to returning for the 2025 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 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:*

ii. *Reduce the hours of operation, by not running the first, and last two hours of every day.*

- *This was done in 2023, postponing service starting at 8:15 to 8:35 in order to allow bringing drivers over from Denman Island to drive the morning shift. (This did require our team picking that person up at the ferry at 8 a.m. each day they worked).*
- *The end of day service was also reduced from 8:35 p.m. in 2022, to 7:35 p.m. in 2023, to help shorten the day when one driver was working both a.m. and p.m. shifts. This also was practical at the end of the summer to avoid operating at dusk, when there are no streetlights or lights at most of the stops.*

Improve Promotion and Inform People Better

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

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.*

Along with the route map and schedule being available on www.hornbybus.com and 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 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, parking at the Coop and the Community Hall.*
ii. *The annual Quilt Show. We established a temporary bus stop at the venue to help with limited parking .*
iii. *Post-season P.R. from participating in the Annual Fall Fair Parade and Zucchini Races. On Sept. 15, we pick up the Agricultural judges from Denman, at the ferry, take them to the Fair grounds, and vice versa.*

Fall Fair Parade, September 15, 2024

More Public Relations:

The Spring of 2024, the neighbour's bus broke down on the critical May long weekend, the 40th anniversary of the Denman Potters Tour, which attracts a lot of off-island visitors. As we were not yet in service, and had competed the C.V.I., we loaned our bus to Denman for service over the weekend.

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 have 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. That report has not yet been released.

It may be a mute point, but let's keep this reality on our radar: 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. *Hold the Spark accountable for providing a 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 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 is the Hornby Island's allocation of the CVRD gas tax money. What could be a better use of this Fund than using it for transportation?

2024 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, Heart Vineyard, Bradsdadsland Campground, Hornby Island Bakery & Pizzeria, a*nd the *Thatch Pub, In total, local sponsors donated $11,500. 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. Although there is some loss and gains on these sponsorships, there is a vocalized local business resistance to paying for transit both through their property taxes, and a sponsorship.

In addition to sponsorships, 2024 on-board fare box collected $2000. In donations, compared to *$1800.* in 2023. *The CVRD operationally contributed $100,000. (Hornby property transit tax levy).*

Expenses

As hiring drivers has been a major challenge in previous years, several strategies were followed:

- Put the word on the street. We contacted all previous drivers, who had parted on good terms, regarding referrals.

- Sponsored a Driver Training program – bringing Darryl, from 1st Class Driving School to the Island.

- Sponsored Steering Committee members to get their Class 4 Unrestricted Drivers License in order to have back-up drivers when needed. Two members did this locally,

and a third attended professional driving school in Vancouver prior to passing their licensing.

As we have had issues in the past with drivers quitting their jobs in August, a policy was put in place to increase the wage from $28/hour to $30/hour and to retain the program started in 2023 to give a $2/hour bonus to drivers that stayed the full summer season.

Operating expenses in 2024 were higher than 2023 due to some maintenance required for the bus (flat tire, new window, safety equipment). The major operational expenses were wages, fuel, project management, fleet & volunteer insurance, advertising, and training/licensing drivers.

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 slated for review, post-feasibility study report being received.

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.

Operational expenses are not yet finalized but estimated at $75,000. The bus runs a very tight financial ship, with a lot of the work done by volunteers. Additionally, administrative support, including payroll, fare collection, statistics analysis, accounting, trouble shooting, P.R., advertising, coordination of Steering Committee

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, shelter, bus shelters, safety equipment, signs, etc.

For 2024, with a more lucrative pay schedule we were able to hire 3 drivers to cover the 14 shifts/week. We also acknowledge that off island drivers will need assistance in securing living accommodations. Hornby Island Bakery & Pizzeria are thanked for saving a rental unit for the bus drivers in 2022 and 2023 summers.

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

Volunteers or the Professionals?

Again, in the absence of having the 2024 Feasibility Study released:
The Future of Transit on Hornby –

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 6 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 recommendations 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 with a volunteer Steering Committee, administered by HICEEC
ii. B.C. Transit assumes their responsibility, through its service provider, the CVRD.
iii. 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 regading 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.

Hornby Island Community Economic Enhancement Corporation

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

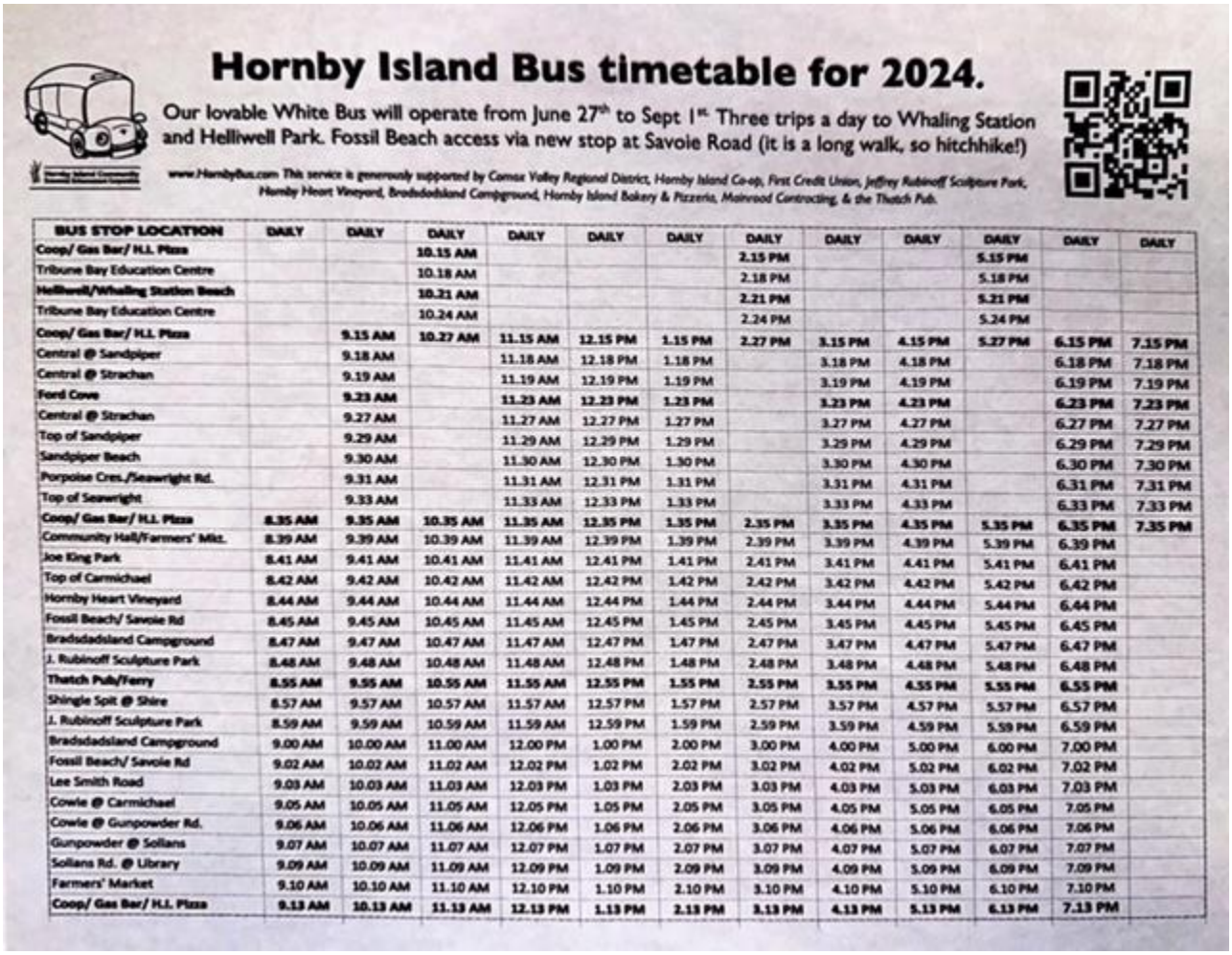
Product Description

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: 2024 Schedule



Hornby Island Bus timetable for 2024.

Our lovable White Bus will operate from June 27th to Sept 1st. Three trips a day to Whaling Station and Helliwell Park. Fossil Beach access via new stop at Savoie Road (it is a long walk, so hitchhike!)

www.HornbyBus.com This service is generously supported by Comox Valley Regional District, Hornby Island Co-op, First Credit Union, Jeffrey Rubinoff Sculpture Park, Hornby Heart Vineyard, Bradsdadsland Campground, Hornby Island Bakery & Pizzeria, Mainwood Contracting, & the Thatch Pub.

BUS STOP LOCATION	DAILY	DAILY	DAILY	DAILY	DAILY	DAILY	DAILY	DAILY	DAILY	DAILY	DAILY	DAILY
Coop/ Gas Bar/ H.I. Pizza			10.15 AM				2.15 PM			5.15 PM		
Tribune Bay Education Centre			10.18 AM				2.18 PM			5.18 PM		
Helliwell/Whaling Station Beach			10.21 AM				2.21 PM			5.21 PM		
Tribune Bay Education Centre			10.24 AM				2.24 PM			5.24 PM		
Coop/ Gas Bar/ H.I. Pizza		9.15 AM	10.27 AM	11.15 AM	12.15 PM	1.15 PM	2.27 PM	3.15 PM	4.15 PM	5.27 PM	6.15 PM	7.15 PM
Central @ Sandpiper		9.18 AM		11.18 AM	12.18 PM	1.18 PM		3.18 PM	4.18 PM		6.18 PM	7.18 PM
Central @ Strachan		9.19 AM		11.19 AM	12.19 PM	1.19 PM		3.19 PM	4.19 PM		6.19 PM	7.19 PM
Ford Cove		9.23 AM		11.23 AM	12.23 PM	1.23 PM		3.23 PM	4.23 PM		6.23 PM	7.23 PM
Central @ Strachan		9.27 AM		11.27 AM	12.27 PM	1.27 PM		3.27 PM	4.27 PM		6.27 PM	7.27 PM
Top of Sandpiper		9.29 AM		11.29 AM	12.29 PM	1.29 PM		3.29 PM	4.29 PM		6.29 PM	7.29 PM
Sandpiper Beach		9.30 AM		11.30 AM	12.30 PM	1.30 PM		3.30 PM	4.30 PM		6.30 PM	7.30 PM
Porpoise Cres./Seawright Rd.		9.31 AM		11.31 AM	12.31 PM	1.31 PM		3.31 PM	4.31 PM		6.31 PM	7.31 PM
Top of Seawright		9.33 AM		11.33 AM	12.33 PM	1.33 PM		3.33 PM	4.33 PM		6.33 PM	7.33 PM
Coop/ Gas Bar/ H.I. Pizza	8.35 AM	9.35 AM	10.35 AM	11.35 AM	12.35 PM	1.35 PM	2.35 PM	3.35 PM	4.35 PM	5.35 PM	6.35 PM	7.35 PM
Community Hall/Farmers' Mkt.	8.39 AM	9.39 AM	10.39 AM	11.39 AM	12.39 PM	1.39 PM	2.39 PM	3.39 PM	4.39 PM	5.39 PM	6.39 PM	
Joe King Park	8.41 AM	9.41 AM	10.41 AM	11.41 AM	12.41 PM	1.41 PM	2.41 PM	3.41 PM	4.41 PM	5.41 PM	6.41 PM	
Top of Carmichael	8.42 AM	9.42 AM	10.42 AM	11.42 AM	12.42 PM	1.42 PM	2.42 PM	3.42 PM	4.42 PM	5.42 PM	6.42 PM	
Hornby Heart Vineyard	8.44 AM	9.44 AM	10.44 AM	11.44 AM	12.44 PM	1.44 PM	2.44 PM	3.44 PM	4.44 PM	5.44 PM	6.44 PM	
Fossil Beach/ Savoie Rd	8.45 AM	9.45 AM	10.45 AM	11.45 AM	12.45 PM	1.45 PM	2.45 PM	3.45 PM	4.45 PM	5.45 PM	6.45 PM	
Bradsdadsland Campground	8.47 AM	9.47 AM	10.47 AM	11.47 AM	12.47 PM	1.47 PM	2.47 PM	3.47 PM	4.47 PM	5.47 PM	6.47 PM	
J. Rubinoff Sculpture Park	8.48 AM	9.48 AM	10.48 AM	11.48 AM	12.48 PM	1.48 PM	2.48 PM	3.48 PM	4.48 PM	5.48 PM	6.48 PM	
Thatch Pub/Ferry	8.55 AM	9.55 AM	10.55 AM	11.55 AM	12.55 PM	1.55 PM	2.55 PM	3.55 PM	4.55 PM	5.55 PM	6.55 PM	
Shingle Spit @ Shire	8.57 AM	9.57 AM	10.57 AM	11.57 AM	12.57 PM	1.57 PM	2.57 PM	3.57 PM	4.57 PM	5.57 PM	6.57 PM	
J. Rubinoff Sculpture Park	8.59 AM	9.59 AM	10.59 AM	11.59 AM	12.59 PM	1.59 PM	2.59 PM	3.59 PM	4.59 PM	5.59 PM	6.59 PM	
Bradsdadsland Campground	9.00 AM	10.00 AM	11.00 AM	12.00 PM	1.00 PM	2.00 PM	3.00 PM	4.00 PM	5.00 PM	6.00 PM	7.00 PM	
Fossil Beach/ Savoie Rd	9.02 AM	10.02 AM	11.02 AM	12.02 PM	1.02 PM	2.02 PM	3.02 PM	4.02 PM	5.02 PM	6.02 PM	7.02 PM	
Lee Smith Road	9.03 AM	10.03 AM	11.03 AM	12.03 PM	1.03 PM	2.03 PM	3.03 PM	4.03 PM	5.03 PM	6.03 PM	7.03 PM	
Cowie @ Carmichael	9.05 AM	10.05 AM	11.05 AM	12.05 PM	1.05 PM	2.05 PM	3.05 PM	4.05 PM	5.05 PM	6.05 PM	7.05 PM	
Cowie @ Gunpowder Rd.	9.06 AM	10.06 AM	11.06 AM	12.06 PM	1.06 PM	2.06 PM	3.06 PM	4.06 PM	5.06 PM	6.06 PM	7.06 PM	
Gunpowder @ Sollans	9.07 AM	10.07 AM	11.07 AM	12.07 PM	1.07 PM	2.07 PM	3.07 PM	4.07 PM	5.07 PM	6.07 PM	7.07 PM	
Sollans Rd. @ Library	9.09 AM	10.09 AM	11.09 AM	12.09 PM	1.09 PM	2.09 PM	3.09 PM	4.09 PM	5.09 PM	6.09 PM	7.09 PM	
Farmers' Market	9.10 AM	10.10 AM	11.10 AM	12.10 PM	1.10 PM	2.10 PM	3.10 PM	4.10 PM	5.10 PM	6.10 PM	7.10 PM	
Coop/ Gas Bar/ H.I. Pizza	9.13 AM	10.13 AM	11.13 AM	12.13 PM	1.13 PM	2.13 PM	3.13 PM	4.13 PM	5.13 PM	6.13 PM	7.13 PM	

Appendix D: 2024 Route map