



2021 Service Review Council Questions

SERVICE AREA: Transit

PAGE NUMBER: 1-9

ELECTED OFFICIAL: Poole

QUESTION:

I'd like to know what might shift in your service areas (staffing, contracting, programs) if there were roughly a 5% or 10% cut in the tax revenue available to your department, compared to 2019, for your service areas.

I'm asking this question of all departments during this pandemic period. Many of us in business are forced to tighten our belts. While there may be arguments at higher-levels of government for fiscal spending to stimulate the economy, at our municipal level, by reducing taxes we help reduce the burdens on our residents.

What operations could be reduced for 2021, perhaps deferred by a year or two?

Operations and capital projects are intertwined. A new capital project typically needs people to oversee it. Are there capital projects, which, if deferred, might free up some of your staff time to deliver current services you would prioritize?

ANSWER:

Administration takes guidance for the service review and budget from the Governance and Finance Committee during the review of the Financial Plan. The service review is this Committee's opportunity to review the services offered by the Town and either enhance or reduce service levels based on based on the needs of their constituents. Administration has adjusted budgets and work plans for the targets set out in the financial plan in July 2020 and reconfirmed in December 2020.

Operating impacts resulting from capital projects can be found at the end of each of the previously approved capital project descriptions included throughout the service review. During the service review presentations administration will highlight individual operating impacts as we go through each capital project.



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SERVICE AREA: Transit

PAGE NUMBER: n/a

ELECTED OFFICIAL: Christensen

QUESTION:

What are the projections for transit use, regarding considerations for social distancing and other Covid requirements?

ANSWER:

The BVRTSC has budgeted for 50% of 2019 ridership for the first part of 2021, with an increase to 75% for the summer months and 100% for next fall. This is predicated on restrictions being lifted as they were in 2020 and proposes that more visitors travel to the Banff area in 2021 than 2020. Should there be further restrictions in place, these budget projections will require amending. The Roam safety protocols that are currently in place and have been communicated helped to slowly increase confidence in transit travel during the summer of 2020, which equated to steadily increasing ridership as the months went on.



2021 Service Review Council Questions

SERVICE AREA: Transit Department

PAGE NUMBER: 2 and 18

ELECTED OFFICIAL: Poole

QUESTION:

Section: Transit (p.2, and 18)

Roll-up operating budget

I notice that the tax funding required would jump from \$1.3M in 2019 to \$1.7M, proposed for 2021, roughly a 25% increase.

I would like to hear Administration discuss the tradeoffs, for and against, keeping the transit burden on our taxes flat, that is, no increase by 25%. What would the impacts on our service be?

From my recollection, we were all quite satisfied with the level of service and transit ridership in 2019, and though we have had a longer-term plan for increasing transit, given the pandemic budget constraints, I'm wondering how we can deliver transit without raising the tax burden (now and, given debt-financed project, in the future) during this period.

For example, might it require us to defer Project T-31-20, the \$500k electric bus purchase, by 1 or 2 years?

ANSWER:

Transit service levels for 2021 are based on similar levels to those provided in 2019. With COVID restrictions on travel anticipated to still be in place at some level, the projected revenues are down substantially on Banff local routes (approx. \$228K) while providing a similar level of service.

Roam's hotel partners are realizing significant losses of revenues and guest room nights, reducing their ability to remain in the program. The current significantly reduced fees being charged to hotel partners are based on their actual ridership and are allowing them to still offer transit to guests and staff. This is critical for traffic congestion for this year and even more so moving forward past 2021.

With capacity restrictions likely still in place throughout 2021 we will be running the service with fewer passengers and more spacing on the buses to increase safety of passengers and staff. Reducing service levels for summer would increase crowding on buses and affect both customer confidence and safety.

Roam has 3 electric buses already purchased and in storage pending the completion of the transit storage building. Project T-31-20 is included in that purchase and the expense cannot be deferred. With the additional fleet being added and not fully utilized in 2021, expenses such as amortization and ongoing maintenance occur without having the full benefit of a fully utilized fleet. Commissioning of these buses in 2021 puts Roam at the forefront of the transition to zero emission buses, greatly enhances our environmental sustainability image, and prepares Roam and Banff well for the significant growth anticipated going forward.



2021 Service Review Council Questions

SERVICE AREA: Transit Department

PAGE NUMBER: 9

ELECTED OFFICIAL: Poole

QUESTION:

Section: Transit (p.9)

2021 Priorities

I would like to have a discussion about what level of taxes we are prepared to endure before we agree with the three proposed priorities.

(a) suggested Priority for 2021: aim for a higher %-age cost recovery, given that most users are visitors (if I am not mistaken).

(b) suggested Priority for 2021: report on the transit ridership (number and frequency of use by different cohorts, e.g.: Banff residents; regional residents; hotel guests; day-visitors arriving by private vehicle; other visitors).

(c) suggested Priority for 2021: high-level strategic review of our transit system (including a transportation economics, environmental systems perspective) to help us better understand to what extent the transit services displace or supplement other travel.

ANSWER:

- a) Roam Transit (pre-COVID) has maintained one of the highest cost recovery percentages in the country. Transit agencies strive to have cost recovery in the range of 50%, with 55% cost recovery only being achieved by a minimal number of agencies. In 2019, Banff local transit had an average cost recovery percentage of 63.5%. Cost recovery is negatively affected by the desire to move people out of their private vehicles to reduce congestion (ie. Free fares from campgrounds keeps RV's out of town but the offset is lower cost recovery)

- b) Transit ridership is tracked by pass type and cash fares, however there is currently no quantifiable way to identify local ridership vs. visitors. Monthly and longer pass ridership can be attributed to locals however there is no way to identify whether a cash paying customer is a local or visitor. Hotel partner ridership can be identified and analyzed (staff and guests separately) however visitors staying at non-partner hotels also use transit and would not be able to be identified in the data.

- c) In late 2017 the BVRTSC had a Banff Local Transit Service review completed by Dillon Consulting at a cost of approximately \$50K. This study delved deeply into Banff transit routes, stops, schedules and infrastructure. This review validated the route structure that Roam currently operates and identified both a 5 and 10 year service strategy with recommendations that were reviewed by both the BVRTSC and TOB, with a number of recommendations being adopted.

Additionally, at the end of 2018, the BVRTSC conducted an in depth fare review with the results guiding some minor changes on fare offerings and passes. The fare review conducted confirmed that the current fares charged on both local and regional services were appropriate for the service provided and achieved a balance of revenue received and encouraging ridership. A fare increase was not recommended as it would potentially harm the goal of getting people out of private vehicles and onto transit.



2021 Service Review Council Questions

SERVICE AREA: Transit Department

PAGE NUMBER: 20

ELECTED OFFICIAL: Poole

QUESTION:

Section: Transit,, Service Area 2 of 2 (p.20)

I notice that the regional services budget proposal rises from tax supported amount of \$257k/y in 2019 to \$364k/y in the proposed budget for 2021, an increase of 42%.

Please discuss the tradeoffs, for and against, keeping the regional transit burden on our taxes flat, that is, no increase by 42%. What would the impacts on our service be?

ANSWER:

Increased frequency on the Regional service was approved in 2019 for commencing in 2020. Shortly after the service increased (30-35 minute frequency throughout the day until 7:30pm) COVID surfaced and frequency was reduced. The budget for 2021 includes previously approved service levels to meet the needs of commuters and visitors in the Bow Valley. Ridership and restrictions will be monitored by the BVRTSC and service levels will be adjusted as required.

Projected revenue for 2021 on the Regional service is down approximately \$200K from actual revenue received in 2019. In addition, some expenses such as maintenance, driver wages and insurance have increased by inflationary values, along with some increased costs from moving to the new transit storage building in March.